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THE NEW
MONTH OF MARY,

OR REFLECTIONS

FOR EACH DAY OF THE MONTH,

ON THE DIFFERENT TITLES APPLIED TO

THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD,

IN THE LITANY OF LORETTO:

PRINCIPALLY DESIGNED FOR

THE MONTH OF MAY.

BY THE

VERY REV. P. R. KENRICK.



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APPROBATION.

We approve of "The New Month of Mary," prepared by the Very Rev. Peter R. Kenrick, and recommend the devout exercises which it contains, as expressive of high veneration for the Ever-blessed Virgin Mother of God, and calculated to promote the imitation of her virtues.

Given under our hand at Philadelphia, this 25th day
of April 1840.

† FRANCIS PATRICK KENRICK,

Bp. Arath. and Coadj. of Bp. Philadelphia.

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PREFACE.

THE devotion of the faithful towards the Mother of God has inspired them to consecrate the month of May in a special manner to her honour. This pious practice originated in Italy ; and the month of May was selected in preference to any other, from a wish to change a season of dissipation and amusement into one of instruction and devotion. From Italy it passed into France, and other countries of Europe, where it has been found productive of the most beneficial results. Within the last few years, it has been introduced into the United States, and has been practised by numbers of the faithful servants of Mary, who eagerly profit by this opportunity of testifying their love and gratitude to the Holy Mother of God, and of cultivating the virtues which would assimilate them to this perfect model of Christians.

Several works have appeared in Italy and France, to aid the faithful in the practice of this devotion. The former have generally treated of

the great moral truths of religion ; while those published in France have more particularly considered the virtues and prerogatives of the Holy Mother of God. The excellent "*Mois de Marie*," of which a translation has been published in Baltimore, is perhaps one of the best of this latter class which has appeared. That the present writer, in presuming to offer a new Month of Mary to the public, may not seem guilty of presumption, he deems it but proper to declare, that he has acted more in compliance with the wish of a respected friend, than from any idea that he could improve on what had already appeared. The Litany of the Blessed Virgin seemed to offer him the most suitable plan for the work he contemplated ; as it would afford the opportunity, not only of setting forth the privileges and virtues of Mary, but also of explaining a form of prayer, which may be said to have received the sanction of the Church, and which is so generally practised by the faithful throughout the world. He has been obliged to omit some of the titles by which the Blessed Virgin is addressed in the Litany ; because he found it necessary in most instances to confine himself to the explanation of a single appellation each day. Still, the present work may be considered as an explanation of the whole Litany, the omitted addresses being synonymous with those explained. Thus, for example, the expla-

nation of the title "Queen of Virgins" has been left out, because it had already been given in the exposition of the preceding epithet, "Virgin of Virgins." The Author has endeavoured to place before the pious reader those passages of Sacred Scripture, in which the prerogatives of Mary are set forth, or which the church employs to describe them. The testimonies of the Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and of others of her children, distinguished for piety and learning, have been occasionally introduced; and such moral lessons, as seemed naturally to arise from the subject of each title, have been presented to the attention of the devout admirer of Mary. It is hoped, that none of her privileges or prerogatives have been omitted; and that most of the virtues, which should adorn her servants, will be found inculcated in the little work now presented to the public.

PRACTICE OF THIS DEVOTION.

1. On the evening before the first of May, the persons who unite to practise this devotion will assemble before an altar, over which is an image of the Blessed Virgin, which should be adorned with flowers, and other suitable decorations. The Litany of the Loretto is either said or sung. After this the meditation is slowly read by one, in a clear and loud voice, and a long pause made at the end of each of the three parts into which it is divided. The example or edifying narrative, subjoined to each meditation, is then read; after which the prayer is to be recited, in which all should unite, or at least endeavour to excite within themselves sentiments corresponding with those expressed in the prayer. After the 'practice' and 'aspiration' have been read, the hymn of the Blessed Virgin, "Bright Mother of our Maker, Hail!" may be sung, or the Rosary, or some other approved devotion in her honour

may be recited.* The practice recommended each day may, generally, be performed at the usual hour of assembling, or at any other time of the day that may be found most convenient. The aspiration should, if possible, be committed to memory, so that it might frequently be repeated during the course of each day.

2. The meditation read each evening should be carefully impressed on the memory, and made the subject of half, or, at least, a quarter of an hour's reflection, on the following morning. A resolution to practise the particular virtue which it inculcates should be the fruit of this morning exercise. If possible, Mass should be heard each day ; and the ordinary devotions to Mary practised with more than ordinary fervour and exactness.

3. As the object of this devotion is to eradicate vice from the heart, and plant in its stead the seed of heavenly virtue, each one should prepare for the exercises of this month, by approaching the sacraments of penance and the holy eucharist. If that be not possible, let him excite his heart to sincere contrition for having offended God, and resolve to take the earliest opportunity of being reconciled with him. Each one should propose to overcome some vice or failing, to which he is most particularly subject, or inclined ; or to acquire some virtue, or degree of virtue, of which he may stand in need, or to which the grace of God may prompt him to aspire. All the exercises of the month should be specially directed to attain this object.

* See the Litany of the Sacred Heart of Mary at the end of this book.

4. On the tenth and twentieth days of the month, it is recommended to examine in what manner the exercises of the preceding days have been performed; that thus whatever neglect or tepidity may have accompanied the practice of this devotion may be repented of and avoided. The sacraments of penance and the holy eucharist may be received on these days, to obtain pardon for the past, and the grace necessary for the due discharge of the remaining part of this salutary devotion.

5. On the Sunday next immediately following the last day of the month, all those engaged in this devotion should approach the sacraments of penance and the eucharist. At a convenient hour in the afternoon, the act of consecration, found at the end of these exercises, should be read by the pastor of the church, in which the devotion has been performed. After this, with the bishop's permission, benediction of the Most Holy Sacrament should conclude the solemn act of consecration. This ceremony might take place on the last day of the month, but the following Sunday is generally preferred; that all may have the opportunity of approaching the sacraments, and that the act of consecration may be performed with greater solemnity.

THE LITANY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

Lord! have mercy on us.

Christ! have mercy on us.

Lord! have mercy on us.

Christ! hear us: Christ! graciously hear us.

God the Father of Heaven ! *Have mercy on us.*
God the Son, Redeemer of the world ! *Have mercy on us.*

God the Holy Ghost ! *Have mercy on us.*

Holy Trinity, one God ! *Have mercy on us.*

Holy Mary !

Holy mother of God !

Holy Virgin of Virgins !

Mother of Christ !

Mother of Divine Grace !

Mother most pure !

Mother most chaste !

Mother undefiled !

Mother unviolated !

Mother most amiable !

Mother most admirable !

Mother of our Creator !

Mother of our Redeemer !

Virgin most prudent !

Virgin most venerable !

Virgin most renowned !

Virgin most powerful !

Virgin most merciful !

Virgin most faithful !

Mirror of justice !

Seat of wisdom !

Cause of our joy !

Spiritual vessel !

Vessel of honour !

Vessel of singular devotion !

Mystical rose ?

Tower of David !

Tower of ivory !

House of gold !

Ark of the covenant !

Pray for us.

Gate of heaven !
 Morning star !
 Health of the weak !
 Refuge of sinners !
 Comforter of the afflicted !
 Help of Christians !
 Queen of angels !
 Queen of patriarchs ?
 Queen of prophets !
 Queen of Apostles !
 Queen of Martyrs ;
 Queen of Confessors !
 Queen of Virgins !
 Queen of all Saints !

Pray for us.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world ! *Spare us, O Lord !*

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world ! *Graciously hear us, O Lord !*

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world ! *Have mercy on us !*

Christ hear us ! *Christ ! graciously hear us.*

Lord ! have mercy on us. *Christ ! have mercy on us.* Lord ! have mercy on us.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God !

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray.

Defend, we beseech thee, O Lord ! through the intercession of the Blessed Mary, ever virgin, this family from all adversity ; and, as in all humility, they prostrate themselves before thee, do thou mercifully protect them against all the snares of their enemies ; through Christ, our Lord. *Amen.*

The Prayer of St. Bernard.

REMEMBER, O most compassionate Virgin Mary! that, from all ages, it is unheard of, that any one was forsaken, who, placing himself under thy maternal protection, implored thy assistance, and begged the favour of thy prayers. Animated with the confidence which this inspires, I fly to thee, O Virgin of virgins, and mother of my God! and in the bitterness of my sorrow, I throw myself at thy feet. O mother of the eternal Word! despise not my humble supplication, but listen graciously, and mercifully grant the request, which from my heart I make thee. *Amen.*

A form of Consecration to the Mother of God, used by St. Aloysius Gonzaga.

O Holy Mary! my Mother and Advocate, to thy care, and particular protection, and into the bosom of thy mercy, to-day, and every day, and at the hour of my death, I commend my soul and body; all my hope and consolation, all my difficulties and afflictions, my life, and the end of my life, I commend to thee: that through thy most powerful intercession, and through thy merits, all my works and actions may be directed according to thy will, and that of thy divine Son. *Amen.*

THE NEW MONTH OF MARY.

FIRST DAY.

HOLY MARY,

Pray for us.

“Blessed art thou by thy God in every tabernacle of Jacob, for in every nation that shall hear thy name, the God of Israel shall be magnified on occasion of thee.”—Judith, xiii. 31.

These words were addressed to Judith, when she returned triumphant to Bethulia, bearing the head of Holofernes, the leader of the enemies of God's people. The life of this heroic woman was one of exemplary virtue. Deprived at an early age of her husband, she consecrated the days of her widowhood to the practices of piety and mortification in the retirement of her own house. “She feared the Lord very much,”* and her confidence in his divine protection made her

* Jud. viii. 8.

rebuke Ozias, the prince of the people of Israel, for having determined to deliver up to Holofernes the city of Bethulia, unless relief should arrive within five days. Nay more, she laid aside "the garments of her widowhood, and went forth to the enemy's camp, trusting in the protection, and relying on the assistance of God. She knew that 'His power is not in a multitude,' but that by her weak arm He could defeat the machinations of the host of warriors who surrounded the city, and that "the mountains should be moved from the foundations with the waters, the rocks should melt before the face"* of the Lord. The gentile Achior, who also dwelt in Bethulia, was so struck with the proof of the divine power manifested in her success, that falling down at her feet, he revered her, and said: "Blessed art thou by thy God in every tabernacle of Jacob, for in every nation that shall hear thy name, the God of Israel shall be magnified on occasion of thee."

The church recognises in the triumph of Judith over Holofernes, the leader of the enemies of God's people, an expressive type of that triumph by which Mary overcame Lucifer, the leader of the hosts of rebel angels, who sought to involve the human race in his crime of disobedience, and the punishment with which it was followed. Of her it was said by God to the serpent,—the murderer from the beginning: "She shall crush thy head."† By bringing forth Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world, she has, in her divine Son, triumphed over the arch enemy of our race. She was in a much more special manner "blessed

* Jud. xvi. 18.

† Gen. iii. 15.

among women"* than even Judith. This heroic woman did, indeed, save her people from a great temporal calamity; but Mary has "prevented our ruin in the presence of God,"† by bringing forth Him who blotted out "the handwriting of the decree that was against us—fastening it to the cross."‡ Mary, an humble virgin, was the instrument of God's mercy and power; because "He regarded her humility," and saw in her nothing to render her unworthy to co-operate with Him in the great work of man's redemption.

Holiness of life is the best preparation by which we can render ourselves capable of corresponding with God's designs upon us. Had the piety of Judith been of an ordinary character, would she have ever been chosen to be a type of Mary's triumph? would she have been capable of such an effort of zeal? would God have inspired her with so much courage, and given to her weak arm so much strength? Had the sanctity of Mary been less transcendent, would she have been selected to be the mother of Him who is holiness itself? If, then, we would correspond with the designs of God, we must make holiness of life the first and principal object of our solicitude. God wants not our wealth, for "the earth is His, and the fulness thereof:" He stands not in need of our talents and learning, for "He giveth understanding to little ones:" He requires not our services, however important or indispensable they may appear to be: but this he demands; that we do his will, which is "our sanctification." If we aim at the perfection of virtue, and endeavour

* Luke, i. 42.

† Jud. xiii. 25.

‡ Col. ii. 14.

to become fit instruments in his hands, by unreservedly devoting ourselves to his service ;— although poor, like the apostles, we shall, like them, enrich others ; although not gifted with great talents, we shall be truly wise, by being wise unto salvation ; and, whatever be our station, we shall contribute more effectually to God's glory, than otherwise we could, by the most abundant alms, the most brilliant talents, or the most devoted zeal. Holiness of life is then the one thing necessary. Where shall we find so perfect a model of holiness among mere creatures, as in Mary ; or where shall we behold how wonderfully God rewards sanctity better than in her extraordinary dignity of Mother of God ?

EXAMPLE.

The venerable John Berchmans was born on the 13th of March, 1599, at Diest, a small town of Brabant. At seven years of age, he was accustomed to rise at a very early hour, that he might thus have more time for study and prayer. He usually served many masses ; and the facility with which he learned his lessons, proved that the time he spent in the church was not lost. It might be said of him,—as was said of St. Basil and St. Gregory of Nazianzen, while they were students at Athens,—that he only knew two streets, that which led to the church, and that which conducted to the school. He made his first communion with sentiments of the most lively faith and tender piety, and ever afterwards seemed to live for no other purpose than to love his Divine Saviour and his most Holy Mother.

On certain days he would go to pay his devotions to Mary in the neighbouring chapel of Montaigu. He preferred to walk there alone, that he might have the opportunity of praying on the way without distraction. On the eve of such pilgrimages, he deprived himself of his breakfast and dessert, which he gave to the poor. So great was his purity, that he did not even know the name of the contrary vice. He avoided the most distant occasions of temptation, and shunned such of his companions as spoke with unbecoming freedom.

At the close of his school-studies, he was admitted into a confraternity of students which was established to honour the Mother of God, and to induce youth to imitate her virtues. At the beginning of each month, he consulted the director of this congregation, to know what were the faults he should correct in himself, and what mortification he should practise, during the month, in honour of his good Mother. Having spent his youth so holily, he quitted the world, and entered into the Society of Jesus. In taking this step, he proposed to aim at perfect sanctity, and the remainder of his life was one continual effort to attain perfection. On his death-bed, he never ceased to recommend devotion to the mother of God, to those around him, and said that the least sacrifices pleased her, provided they were persevered in. Addressing the Holy Virgin, he said: "Do not abandon me, O Mary! I am thy son. Thou knowest I have vowed obedience to thee." After the recommendation of a departing soul had been read, he began to sing the "Ave Maris Stella," "Bright mother of our Maker, hail!" and at the words, "Exert for us a mother's care," his

joy displayed itself in the extraordinary vivacity of his manner. He died on the 13th of August, 1621. He was declared 'Venerable' by Benedict XIV., in 1745, and the process of his canonization is at present being promoted with every probability of success.

PRAYER.

Yes, Holy Virgin! blessed be the Lord, who has glorified thy name,—who has put it in the mouths of all the faithful,—who has imprinted it in such a manner on our hearts, that, after the holy name of God, and that of Jesus, thine should be that which we most deeply revere, and most frequently repeat. Teach me the virtue of this holy name, which is sweet as the odour of the most precious perfumes, and full of unction and consolation for those who invoke it. O, Holy Mary, while I pronounce thy sweet name, I bring to mind the entire plan of my redemption, and recall, at the same time, my own duties. May thy holy name teach me to fulfil them punctually: may it protect me in the dangers of this life, and particularly at the hour of my death. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Conceive a great devotion to the name of Mary: pronounce it reverently, and ever accompany your invocation of the adorable name of Jesus with a devout aspiration to Mary, his most Holy Mother. "The name of Mary," says St. Antonine, "is joy to the heart, honey to the mouth, and music to the ear."

ASPIRATION.

May thy name, O Mother of God, be the last sound that escapes my lips.—St. Germanus.

SECOND DAY.

HOLY MOTHER OF GOD,

Pray for us.

“Mary brought forth her first born son.”—Luke, ii. 7.

Mary is the mother of God, because she is the mother of Jesus Christ. In this Divine Saviour, the divine and human natures are united in an inconceivable manner, of which, however, we may form some idea, although imperfect, by considering the union of soul and body in man. This union is called hypostatic, or personal, because these different natures constitute the person of Christ. As soul and body, although so essentially different as to render their mutual influence on each other inconceivable, are yet so closely united as to form but one and the same person—man; so the divine and human natures, although infinitely distinct, are united in the manner above-mentioned, and constitute one and the same person,—Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God, and consequently, Mary, who is His mother, is the

mother of God. She is not, indeed, the mother of the divine nature, which exists from all eternity, and could not have had a beginning, as it cannot have an end. But, as in speaking of an ordinary parent, it is literally true to say, that she is mother of the child that she brings forth, although the soul, the more noble portion of man's nature, is nowise derived from her, but immediately created by God ; so, in like manner, it is strictly and literally true to say, that Mary is the mother of God, because she is the mother of Jesus Christ, who unites in his person the two natures of God and man. Hence holy Elizabeth, when visited by Mary, who had conceived the son of God, exclaimed : " Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? "* The heretic Nestorius denied that Mary was the mother of God, and, by a necessary consequence, denied the hypostatic or personal union of the two natures of God and man in Jesus Christ. He thus made void the cross of Christ, since it is only this union which imparts an infinite value to the sufferings endured by Christ in his human nature. The church condemned this error in the General Council of Ephesus, which asserted the glorious privilege of Mary, by declaring her to be the Mother of God.

We cannot conceive the greatness of Mary's dignity in being made the mother of God, but we may learn from her divinely inspired lips the cause of this mysterious elevation, which so far surpasses our limited conceptions. " The Lord," says she, in the canticle with which she responded to the

* Luke, i. 43.

pious congratulations of Elizabeth, "has regarded the humility of his handmaid." It was, then, the humility of Mary that, in a special manner, rendered her the object of God's complacency. If we are to form any estimate of the perfection of this virtue in her, by the elevated dignity with which God rewarded it, how great must have been the humility of her, who, enjoying more abundant graces than God had bestowed on any other creature, was still particularly agreeable to God by the humility with which her other extraordinary virtues were accompanied? St. Bernard, when inculcating the necessity of this virtue, says of Mary: "Without humility, I am certain that even her virginity would not have been acceptable to God; for although she pleased him by her virgin purity, still it was her humility that caused her to be made the Mother of God."

By the mystery of the Incarnation, our nature has been wonderfully ennobled. Jesus Christ, as the son of Mary, is our brother, being made in all things like unto us,—without sin. If, then, the humility of Mary was so wonderfully rewarded, we should remember our obligation to practise this virtue, as that which will most assimilate us to our divine model, Jesus Christ, the first-born of many brethren, and to Mary, his mother by nature, and ours by adoption. This is the only condition on which we can hope to be co-heirs with him of that glory which he has acquired by humbling himself "to death, even to the death of the cross."* "Learn of me," says he, "to be meek and humble of heart."†. Yes, let us learn humility from

* Philip, ii. 8.

† Matth. xi. 29.

Him, who,—although the Lord of all, God of God, Light of Light,—annihilated himself, according to the expression of the Apostle, by taking on him the lowliness of our nature, and whose whole life was a continual practice of the most profound humility. What humility in Him, to be born of a poor virgin—to be esteemed the son of Joseph—to work at an humble trade—to choose poor fishermen for his companions—and end his life in the most humiliating, or, rather, ignominious manner ! How strongly does this humility of Christ condemn our pride of birth and ancestry,—our ambition to occupy an elevated station,—and our excessive solicitude when our pride is attacked, by the injuries done to our good name. Ah ! let us look on the mysterious humiliations of the Son of God ; let us look on the transcendent rewards he has bestowed on the humility of his Virgin Mother, and let us learn from her bright example to imitate Jesus, and “ be meek and humble of heart.”

EXAMPLE.

Esther Leggues was the daughter of protestant parents, residing at St. Malo. She received from heaven a very lively faith : from the age of five years she was fond of following the Catholic children to church ; and even privately visited the Ursuline Nuns, for whom she contracted great esteem. At six years of age, she resolved to profess the Catholic religion, and began even then to abstain on the days commanded, without any regard to the presence of her parents, who used flesh meat. Her mother was so irritated at this,

that she frequently struck her :—Esther remained firm, but conducted herself with great sweetness and respect for her parents. She continued daily to recite the Catholic prayers, and especially to address the mother of God in the words of the Angel : “ Hail, Mary.”

One day, when her Catholic companions pretended to flee away from her as a *Huguenot*,—the name by which protestants were then known in France,—the poor child began to cry, and said, with tears in her eyes ; “ although all should abandon me, I will endeavour to secure my salvation as well as I can ; and although alone, I will be protected by God, and assisted by the Blessed Virgin.”

From that period her young friends became still more attached to her, and favoured more and more her pious intentions. One of them kept her beads for her, which Esther would have been afraid to have at home. At the age of ten years, this extraordinary child asked to receive confirmation from the bishop of St. Malo, who, seeing the liveliness of her faith, was unable to refuse her request, and accordingly confirmed her.

She promised to observe the laws of the church, even were her father and mother to kill her, as they sometimes threatened. Meanwhile her parents resolved to bring her to a protestant church. As soon as Esther was aware of this, she besought God to take her out of life ; and her prayer was heard, for some short time afterwards she fell dangerously ill. When her companions visited her, she told them that her beads had been taken from her, but that she continued to recite the rosary, by reckoning the decades on her fingers.

After a few days' sickness, she resigned her pure soul to the hands of her Creator, whom she had served so innocently, and loved with such early and strong affection.

PRAYER.

O holy Mother of God, I am filled with confusion in appearing before one so humble and so holy as thou art, whereas I am nothing but pride and vanity. O thou blessed among women ! I adore with thee the ineffable mystery of the incarnation of thy Son, and I beg of thee to obtain for me a lively sense of my obligation to imitate the humility which He teaches me, both in it, and in the other circumstances of His life and death. O Mary, pray to God for me, and pray without ceasing, as thou seest me surrounded with innumerable enemies. May I, through thy intercession, profit by the excess of thy Son's love : may I praise and serve Him on earth, and for ever be associated with thee in loving and enjoying Him in Heaven. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Spend five minutes before Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist, in meditating on the mystery of his incarnation.

ASPIRATION.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me.

THIRD DAY.

HOLY VIRGIN OF VIRGINS.

Pray for us.

“Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel.”—Isaiah vii. 14.

In the days of Achaz, king of Juda, about 742 years before the birth of Christ, Jerusalem was besieged by the united arms of the kings of Israel and Syria. They threatened the city, not only with the usual consequences of a successful siege, but also with the destruction of the royal house of David, in the place of which they proposed to establish another dynasty. It was in these trying circumstances, when to all human appearance the affairs of Juda were desperate, that God renewed to the house of David, by his prophet Isaiah, the promise he had made to that faithful servant, “to make his seed endure for evermore, and his throne as the days of heaven.”* Achaz did not comply with the prophet’s admonition, “to ask a sign;” but covering his indifference and faithlessness with the cloak of affected respect, he said, “I will not ask, and I will not tempt the Lord.” Turning from this ungrateful son of David, to the house or family of that faithful servant of God, the prophet said: “The Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his

* Ps. 88, 30.

name shall be called Emmanuel." By this prophecy they were assured that the designs of their enemies for the destruction of David's race should not be realized. The event foretold by the prophet was not, indeed, to occur for several centuries after ; but the truth of the prediction was manifested by the fulfilment of other prophecies, made by him on the same occasion, and which were accomplished within a few years.

Every detail of the great plan for the redemption of man, is calculated to fill us with admiration : every where do we find the evidence of the sovereign wisdom which designed, and of the omnipotence which executed it. The virginal birth of the Messiah was a necessary part of the divine economy of the incarnation. It was necessary that God and man should be united in the person of the Redeemer ; but as every ordinary descendant of Adam is involved in his transgression, and as God could not assume a nature sullied with sin, hence the necessity of his being born of a virgin, that thus he might assume our nature, without participating in our guilt. Wonderful union of wisdom and power ! How profound should be our reverence for a mystery in which every thing is so worthy of God,—in which His justice, mercy, and holiness are so signally displayed ! And what should be our veneration for that favoured creature, whom God employed as the handmaid of His mercy, in the most sublime and affecting of all mysteries !

Before the fruitful virginity of Mary, this virtue was but little known among men. It is true, that among all nations it was held in veneration, probably because all nations had more or less distinct

notions that the great Redeemer, the hope of whom glimmered through the darkness of Gentile traditions, was to be born of a virgin. But it was not till the accomplishment of Isaiah's prediction in the son of Mary that "the daughters saw her, and called her blessed:"* and that the psalmist's words were verified: "After her shall virgins be brought to the king."† Wherever the name of Mary has been borne by the ministers of the Gospel of her Divine Son, innumerable virgins, in every age, and every clime, of all ranks and conditions of life, have consecrated to the "king of ages, immortal and invisible," the purest affections of their hearts; and have found, in the relinquishment of all earthly pleasures, and in the entire and undivided dedication of their whole being to God, a purer, more tranquil, and more enduring happiness, than falls to the lot of souls of a less heroic character. Let us raise our eyes to heaven, and behold Mary, encircled with this glorious group, "these first-fruits to the Lamb and to God," who sing "as it were a new canticle," which they alone can sing, and "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth;"‡ then shall we conceive the extent and nature of the title by which we address her, "holy Virgin of Virgins!"

EXAMPLE.§

Catharine Tegahkouita, of the Iroquois nation, was left an orphan in the fourth year of her age; from which time she lived with her aunt, whom

* Cant. vii. 8.

† Ps. xlv. 15.

‡ Apocalypse, xiv. 3, 4.

§ Lettres Edifiantes.

she obeyed with fidelity and affection. She devoted much of her time to manual labour, by which means she avoided idleness, and unnecessarily appearing abroad. When she attained a suitable age, her friends pressed her to marry, but she always found some pretext for deferring it, and this through a love of purity, which was the more extraordinary as she was not yet a Christian. She was baptized on Easter Sunday, in 1676, when she took the name of Catharine.

Shortly after, she had to endure a great persecution. The malice of her enemies exposed her innocence to the greatest dangers; so that she determined on privately leaving her friends; and she accordingly went to a colony of converted Iroquois in the French settlement, where she made her first communion. While there, she was once obliged to accompany the nation to a hunt, and to remain for some time in the forests; but this was but for her an occasion of showing how God may be served in every circumstance. She fastened a cross to the trunk of a tree which overhung a rivulet, and made this retired spot her oratory. At the hour when Mass was said in the settlement, she would kneel down before it, and beg of her guardian angel to assist for her at the holy sacrifice, and to apply to her its fruit.

Having afterwards had occasion to go to Montreal, where, for the first time, she saw some nuns, she was so charmed with their modesty, that she wished to imitate their manner of living, and gave no rest to her confessor until he permitted her to make a vow of perpetual chastity,—a thing, perhaps, before unexampled among the Indians. She made her vow on the day of the Annunciation. Catha-

rine always spoke of Mary with transports of joy. She learned her litany by heart, and recited it privately every evening after the night prayers, which were said in the cabin. In fine, after having led an innocent and penitential life, like St. Aloysius of Gonzague, she died in the midst of the most abundant and sweetest consolations.

PRAYER.

Behold, my God, the most holy and most pure of Virgins, surrounded by the daughters of Sion, who celebrate her glory. I adore the wonders of thy power manifested in her person; and I humbly beseech thee to make me an imitator of her virtue, according to the measure of grace which thou art pleased to impart to me. My soul is dedicated to thee in baptism; may it be ever pure and worthy to be admitted to the nuptials of the Lamb. Let Mary be my model here below; and may she present me hereafter to my heavenly Spouse, Christ Jesus, who with thee and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Devoutly recite the canticle of the "Magnificat," and endeavour to conceive with what sentiments of joy and gratitude it was first chaunted by Mary,

ASPIRATION.

May He, O Mary, who was born of thee to save us, through thy prayers receive us.

FOURTH DAY.

MOTHER OF DIVINE GRACE,

*Pray for us.**"Hail, full of grace."*—Luke, i. 28.

There is nothing more mysterious, or more necessary than divine grace. Without it we cannot hope to please God, because without it we cannot do any thing meritorious of eternal life. To whom are we indebted for that inestimable gift of God? To Jesus Christ, who by His passion and death, has not only reconciled us to His heavenly Father, but has purchased for us, all the graces of which we stand in need. "But not as the offence, so also the gift. For if by the offence of one, many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."* Without this grace, we are unable to entertain a good thought, or even to pronounce the name of Jesus, in a manner conducive to our eternal salvation. "Without me," says Christ to his apostles, "you can do nothing." "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches."† This grace is the gratuitous gift of God, to which we have no claim, except as members of the mystical body of Christ. He is the mystical vine; if the

* Rom. v. 15.

† John, xv. 4, 5.

branches abide in the vine, they will bear much fruit ; if they be separated from it, they must necessarily wither, and be fit for nothing else than to be cast into the fire.

Mary is called the mother of divine grace, because she is the mother of Jesus Christ, "who is made unto us wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption."* God, who chose her to be the instrument of His mercy, by making her the mother of His Son, prepared her for this dignity, by an extraordinary accumulation of His divine grace. Hence, she was saluted by the angel as "full of grace,"† an eulogium which we daily address to her in the prayer of the angelical salutation. "Truly," says St. Bernard, "is she called full of grace, who obtained the grace which no other merited." When we reflect with gratitude on God's liberality to us, in the dispensation of His graces, we should never forget that Mary was particularly instrumental in obtaining for us these gifts, by complying with all the graces she received from God, by which she was rendered worthy to conceive Him in her soul, even before she became Mother of God. What more powerful advocate can we employ with our divine Saviour, when we petition Him for a participation of His graces, than her who gave Him to us,—who knows how much we stand in need of His divine assistance,—and who desires nothing more earnestly than that the kingdom of His grace should be diffused through all hearts. Let us then adopt the advice of St. Bernard ; "let us seek for grace, and seek for it through Mary, because such is the will of

* 1 Cor. i. 30.

† Luke, i. 28.

Him, who has been pleased to give us all through Mary."

The liberality of God towards us in the dispensation of His graces, imposes on us an awful responsibility, unless we profit by them. Besides the graces which we receive in common with all men, we cannot but acknowledge, with sentiments of gratitude, that God has been peculiarly bountiful to us,—that he has given to us graces which He has not vouchsafed to others. Our vocation to be members of the Catholic Church, when so many millions are estranged from its fold;—the opportunities we have of hearing the word of God, and of approaching the sacraments, are blessings not enjoyed by all. We should, however, remember that from those to whom much has been given much will be required; and that, as St. Paul assures us, the earth that is often watered with rain from heaven, and brings forth briers, is nigh to a curse. Let us see, whether our faith influences our conduct;—whether the public instructions which we receive increase in us the love of God, and strengthen in us our determination to serve him;—and whether we derive from the sacraments all the beneficial results they are calculated to produce. Should we find ourselves not to have corresponded with these graces, let us not despond, but go with confidence to the throne of grace. Although our past infidelity may have rendered us unworthy to appear before the Saviour, whose favours we have slighted, Mary will interpose in our behalf:—she will procure for us forgiveness for our past neglect of grace, and will obtain for us that docility of heart, which may render us faithful for the time to come. Let us

beg of her to secure for us, in the hour of our death, the grace of final perseverance,—that triumphant grace which will crown the measure of supernatural gifts here below, and be succeeded by the contemplation and enjoyment of that God from whom every good gift descends.

EXAMPLE.

Monsieur Henri Jouve, while studying at Grenoble in France, led a life very different from that which had been expected from his Christian education; and openly adopted the maxims and practices of the corrupt society in the midst of which he lived. God remembered him in his mercy, and resolved to bring him back to a sense of his duty.

This young man had a sister, called Aloysia, in the convent of the Sacred Heart at Grenoble. She wept bitterly over the obduracy of her beloved brother, who remained deaf to all her expostulations and advice, and frequently made her pious solicitude the subject of his railleries. When God called her out of life, this unfeeling brother heard the news of her death without emotion; and although decency obliged him to attend the solemn function of her exequies, he resolved not to manifest any feeling that might betray what he regarded as weakness of character. In taking this resolution, he did not know with whom he had to struggle; for he had no sooner entered the convent, than he felt an unusual and indescribable sensation. He was conducted to the apartment where the body of the deceased lay, as if in sweet sleep, or rapt in heavenly contemplation. This

sight affected him still more ; he could not restrain the tears that gushed from his eyes, and, kneeling down, he gave vent to his feelings.

The superioress, who was much moved by what she saw, gave him the ring of his departed sister, which he thankfully received. Surprised at these unusual feelings, he retired to the church, where he proposed to assist at the solemn Mass for Aloysia, more, however, through a feeling of propriety than from an inspiration of devotion. On again beholding the lifeless body of his sister borne into the choir, he yielded once more to the feelings of nature, or rather the impulse of grace, and his tears flowed unceasingly. He continued thus agitated during the whole of that day. On the following morning he returned to ask for some of his sister's hair, and spoke much about her. On another occasion he visited the convent, and signified his desire to be conducted to his sister's tomb. The superioress consented, but on condition that he would make a promise which, she said, would gratify his beloved sister. He is astonished—and, hesitatingly, asks ; “ what promise ? ” She bids him to reflect seriously. His agitation increases. She beseeches him to be calm, and to kneel. He refuses. She presses him to yield to the grace that moves him ; to trample on human respect. She herself kneels in a corner of the room and prays most fervently. He walks about—goes away—returns—strikes his forehead, and cries out, “ O Aloysia, what do you want ? why do you pursue me even after death ? ” After a struggle of more than two hours and a half, he kneels down before an image of Mary, and promises much more than was required

by the superioress. He rises, and often repeats, "Come, come, I have promised much, but I do not repent of it. Come, I must ratify these promises on the tomb of Aloysia." He is conducted to it. He casts himself on it, and bursting into tears, renews his promise, which was, not only to approach the sacraments of penance and the eucharist, but also to dedicate himself to God without reserve,—to enter religion.

This miracle of grace may justly be ascribed to the prayers of his sister, whom the superioress had recommended, a few days before her death, to offer up her sufferings to God for the conversion of one of her relatives, and who saw none more dear to her, or who more required her prayers than her loved, but erring brother. This scene took place on the 25th of January, 1821, the festival of St. Paul's conversion. The young man subsequently entered the noviciate of the Fathers of the Faith, among whom he is distinguished by his piety and talents.*

PRAYER.

O holy Mother! in giving Jesus Christ to the world, thou hast opened to us the treasures of all graces, in which are all the gifts of penance, fervour, fidelity, and love. One ray of this divine light, one spark of this sacred fire, would suffice to render me pure in the eyes of thy dear Son. O Mary, full of grace! be thou my advocate with him; place me near his throne, that his precious blood may protect me and blot out and efface

* *Beau mois de Marie*, p. 218. Amiens, 1838.

every thing that has displeased him in my past life. " Hail then, O heavenly Mother, the glory and honour of our church. Continually intercede with Jesus, that I may obtain mercy through thee in the day of judgment, and a participation in those good things, which God has prepared for those who love him."* Amen.

PRACTICE.

Make an act of thanksgiving to Jesus Christ for all the graces you have received from Him. Beg of Mary to be your advocate and patroness with her divine Son. For that purpose say the " Hail Mary," three times.

ASPIRATION.

Hail, full of grace !

* St. Chrysostom.

FIFTH DAY.



MOST PURE MOTHER,

Pray for us.

“Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee.”—Cant. iv. 7.

God always adapts the means he employs to the end he has in view; and accordingly he prepared the mother of his Son for her high destiny by extraordinary privileges. The mind cannot for a moment permit itself to think this most favoured of all creatures, who was to be Mother of God, and who was to co-operate so mysteriously with Him, in the great work of human redemption, could ever have been the object of God's hatred!—could ever have been the slave of the devil by sin. Hence the church, guided as she is by the spirit of truth, applies to Mary the words addressed to the spouse in the canticles: “Thou art all fair, my love, and there is not a spot in thee.” This immunity of Mary from sin was recognised by the great doctor of the church, St. Augustin, who, after saying that all were subject to sin, subjoins: “except the holy Virgin Mary, whom, on account of the honour of our Lord, I do not wish to include when there is question of sin. For hence we know that an abundance of grace was given to her, to overcome sin in every respect, because she merited to conceive and bring forth Him who knew

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not sin.”—St. Irenaeus who had already said, in the second century : “ It was meet that the God of all purity should spring from the greatest purity, from the most pure bosom.”

Mary’s extraordinary privilege consisted, not only in being preserved from all actual sin and imperfection,—so that she never offended God by any sin, however light, and was ever docile to the inspirations of grace,—but also, in being pure and free from the guilt of original sin, even in her very conception. If St. John the Baptist was sanctified in his mother’s womb, when visited by Christ and his holy Mother, because he was to go “ before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways ;” what shall we say of her, who was connected with the same Lord by the closest and tenderest of ties by which we can conceive the creature to approach the Creator, and whose perfect holiness seems so necessary a consequence of this mysterious relation. It is true, that as a child of Adam, she was either included in the decree by which “ death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned,” or was specially exempted by God from the consequences of Adam’s guilt ; but in either supposition, she was preserved from ever actually incurring original sin, by the application of the Redeemer’s merits, whom she was to bring forth. God, with whom no word is impossible, could as easily have prevented her incurring the guilt of original sin, as free her from it after she had incurred it. The general reason above adduced is equally applicable here : and the short but pithy argument of St. Anselm cannot but produce conviction. “ Such a privilege,” says this saint, “ was suitable to her dignity ; it was possible for God to confer it ;

hence He conferred it.”* This was the doctrine of the early church. “She was not,” says Origen, in the third century, “contaminated by the breath of the serpent.”—“She was,” says the holy deacon, St. Ephrem, in the fourth century, “most pure from all stain of sin.”—“To her,” says St. John of Damascus, “the serpent had no access.”

“Holiness becomes thy house, O Lord, for a length of days.” If this be true of the temple which was occasionally filled by God’s glory, and in which he was to receive the petitions of his people, how much more true is it of that living temple—the Blessed Virgin Mary, in whom the whole plenitude of the Deity abode for nine months; and who, for thirty-three years, enjoyed, almost without interruption, the society of Jesus Christ. Let us then honour the peculiar sanctity of Mary, and rejoice with her, on her inestimable privilege of never having been, even for an instant, the object of God’s indignation or displeasure. We should, moreover, remember that our own bodies are the “temples of the Holy Ghost;” and that every principle of reason and religion imposes on us the obligation of keeping them pure and undefiled. “If any man,” says the Apostle, “violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which you are.”† We should not be satisfied with avoiding sin, but should aim at perfection, according to the words of Christ: “Be ye therefore perfect as also your heavenly Father is perfect.”‡ This perfection does not consist in doing extraordinary actions, but in

* Decuit, potuit, ergo fecit. S. Anselm.

† 1 Cor. iii. 7.

‡ 2 Matth. v. 48.

doing our ordinary actions extraordinarily well. It is only necessary to do what we at present do with more exactness and fervour. If we pray as we ought, and bring to the reception of the holy sacraments the dispositions which will cause us to derive from them all the advantages they are calculated to produce; if, in all our actions, we have the greater glory of God steadily before our view, and discharge the duties of our state with fidelity, we shall be perfect. This is the perfection that God requires of us: without it we cannot hope to please him. Let us constantly have the example of the most perfect of God's creatures present to our mind; and make Mary our model on earth, that she may be our advocate in heaven.

EXAMPLE.

Father Ariemna relates the history of a poor shepherdess, who had so great a devotion to the Blessed Virgin, that her greatest delight was to retire to a small mountain-chapel, dedicated to Our Lady. There she poured forth her heart in prayer before her "Good Mother,"—for that was the name by which she addressed her,—incessantly repeating the angelical salutation, "Hail, Mary, full of grace." Her piety found such solid satisfaction in this simple exercise, that she often remained in the chapel for several successive hours, while her flock pastured before it.

The image of the Blessed Virgin, which was in this chapel, was a simple and unadorned statue. The pious maid made for it a rustic, but becoming mantle. She made a garland of some flowers which she had gathered in the neighbourhood, and kneeling before the altar, she presented it to

her "good Mother," saying: "Hail, Mary, full of of grace." Then ascending the altar, she placed this simple, but beautiful crown, on the head of the statue. "Mother, dear Mother," said she then to Mary, "I would willingly place on thy head a crown enriched with gold and precious jewels; but I am a poor shepherdess, and can only offer thee this garland. Accept it as a token of my affection. Thou knowest how I love thee; I can only say, Hail, Mary."

Such simple piety, and artless love could not pass unrewarded. This zealous servant of Mary fell sick, and was soon reduced to the last stage of the malady from which she suffered. At that time two members of a religious order, who were travelling in that district, sat down to rest under the refreshing shade of a tree. Both fell asleep. and both had precisely the same vision. They beheld coming down from heaven, like a golden cloud, a band of beautiful virgins, in the midst of whom was one of surpassing beauty and majesty. On being asked, "whither she was going?" she replied, "I am the mother of God, and I am going with these holy virgins to visit a dying shepherdess, who, during her life, visited me frequently." The vision then vanished. On awaking from sleep, they communicated to each other what they had seen and heard. "Let us also go," said they, "and visit this faithful servant of Mary." Providence conducted them to the cottage of this perfect creature, who had attained a high degree of sanctity by the practice of her humble duties. They found her, stretched on a pallet of straw, exhibiting, in the lily-whiteness of her features, the purity of the soul which had distinguished her,

and in the beautiful expression of her countenance, a confirmation of the vision they had been favoured with. She had just expired.

PRAYER.

O Mary, mother of my God, thou art all beautiful, and there is no stain in thee! Thou art beautiful as the moon, and bright as the sun, by the stainless purity of thy soul. Thou art the glory of Israel, thou art the honour of our race. Thou art an object of admiration for angels and men, who view with astonishment the prodigies of God's grace in thee. But, holy Virgin, what a lesson does thy immaculate purity teach me, who, although not called to thy supereminent dignity, or invested with thy extraordinary privileges, am still made to the image and likeness of God, and commanded to make His perfection the limit of my efforts to please Him. Do thou, O purest of God's creatures, do thou obtain for me a sense of the full extent of my obligation to be holy; as I serve a God who is holiness itself, and look forward with hope to that blessed country into which nothing defiled can enter. O, Mary, sweetest mother of all true children of Jesus Christ, obtain for me the grace to avoid all sin and imperfection, and ever aspire after that perfection which will make me imitate thee more closely on earth, and entitle me to be nearer thee in heaven; where, in thy blessed company, I hope to spend a blissful eternity in the contemplation and enjoyment of my Heavenly Father. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Excite yourself to perfection by frequently remembering that your glory in heaven will be proportioned to your fidelity on earth. "There are many mansions in my Father's house," says our Divine Saviour. Be ambitious of attaining a high degree of glory : it will last for ETERNITY.

ASPIRATION.

In the odour of thy perfumes we run, O holy Mother of God !

 SIXTH DAY.

MOTHER MOST CHASTE,

Pray for us.

"Because thou hast loved chastity, therefore shalt thou be blessed for ever." Judith, xv. 2.

Although the holy woman Judith was distinguished for the practice of all the virtues, she was especially honoured for her love of chastity : for although "exceedingly beautiful" and rich, and deprived of her husband at an early age, she spent the days of her widowhood in the practices of austere retirement. But the virginal chastity

of Mary was of a much higher order, and therefore merited for her a much greater reward : it was her peculiar privilege to possess the joys of motherhood and the honour of virginity. When the angel announced to her that "she should conceive in her womb, and bring forth a son," although he declared that he should be the "Son of the most high God," Mary hesitated ; because she did not comprehend how this could be effected without detriment to the virginity she had vowed to preserve. The difficulty she found in the accomplishment of the angel's promise necessarily supposes that she had made a vow of perpetual continence, as otherwise such a difficulty could not have presented itself to her mind. It was only on being told by the angel, that it was to be the work of the Holy Ghost, and that "the virtue of the Most High should overshadow her," that she gave her assent, and received the greatest favour God can confer on a pure creature, a favour, however, which she would have relinquished, had it been incompatible with her virginal purity.

This great mystery of Mary's virginal maternity was typified in the bush which Moses saw burning on Horeb without being consumed, and from out of which God sent him to free the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt—an expressive figure of our deliverance from the slavery of the devil by Jesus Christ, the Son of this Virgin Mother. St. Bernard compares it to the rod of Aaron, which, when laid in the ark, budded and blossomed without having struck root ;—to the fleece of Gideon, which became moist with dew while the ground around remained dry ;—and to the eastern gate which Ezekiel saw in a vision,

and of which "the Lord said:—This gate shall be shut: it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it, because the Lord the God of Israel hath entered in by it, and it shall be shut."* In the enclosed garden and sealed fountain of Solomon, and in the new sepulchre in which the body of Jesus was deposited, and in which none other was placed, the great doctor of the church, St. Jerome, recognised figures of that perpetual virginity of the Mother of God, which he advocated so powerfully against Jovinian, and which is an article of Catholic faith. Impressed with the most profound veneration, for the extraordinary love of purity which Mary possessed, and for the great rewards with which God crowned it, let us say to her with St. John of Damascus: "O pure and immaculate Queen, save me,—deliver me from eternal damnation!"

"O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory."† This virtue, which shines so conspicuously bright in Mary, has always been the special favourite of Heaven. God delights to dwell with pure souls, whom he enriches with extraordinary graces here below, and rewards with peculiar glory hereafter. Of them it is said by our divine Saviour: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."‡ His love of this virtue may also be seen in the punishments He formerly inflicted, and even now inflicts, on those guilty of the opposite vice. Are we practically convinced of the beauty of this virtue? If so, why are we not more careful to shun all the occasions which might cause the lustre of it to be

* Ezech. xliv. 2. † Wisdom, iv. 1. ‡ Matth., v. 8.

tarnished? Are not our senses unrestrained? Do we not spend much of our valuable time in reading the fashionable productions of the day; and thus lay open for ourselves the source of a thousand temptations or unbecoming recollections? Are our manners marked with that modest reserve without which we are sure to disgust, while we endeavour to please; and what is still more to be apprehended, expose ourselves and others to offend God? Ah! let us turn our eyes to Mary, in whom God has given us a perfect model of purity, and in whom he has shown how powerful is His grace, when we duly co-operate with it. Such was the modesty of this most pure virgin, that St. Ambrose says, "she inspired those who beheld her with a love for this most amiable virtue." Let us guard cautiously this precious treasure, which we carry about in frail vessels, and be ever mindful that our success in preserving it, will be proportioned to the vigilance with which we protect it. Let us often raise our eyes to Mary, whose name alone is expressive of all purity, and beg of her, by her love of this virtue, to obtain for us that we may sanctify the state in which God has placed us, by being holy both in body and in Spirit.

EXAMPLE.

As Mary is the "mother of holy love," she regards with peculiar affection pure souls. What more special favourite of Heaven and brighter example of this virtue can be proposed as a model to the servants of Mary, than St. Aloysius Gonzague, whom the church styles an "angelical

youth?" Aloysius was devoted to the service of the Blessed Virgin by his pious mother, whose life was exposed to great danger in his birth; she had recourse to the powerful intercession of Mary, to whom she promised to dedicate the fruit of her womb. Her prayer was heard; and Aloysius thought he could not better employ his life than in consecrating it to the service of her, who had obtained it for him. In his childhood he never pronounced the holy names of "Jesus and of Mary" without the greatest respect and affection, and he soon learned from his pious parent to address his "dear mother," in the words of the angelical salutation. In his seventh year he had his regular hours of prayer, part of which consisted in the office of Our Lady. In his ninth year he was sent to Florence, for the purpose of prosecuting his studies; and his progress in learning while in this city, was only surpassed by his rapid advances in virtue and perfection. He was particularly attached to the devotion of the Rosary; and being willing to do something to testify his affection for the Queen of Heaven, he thought he could not do any thing more agreeable to her than imitate her example, by dedicating his virginity to God. This he did, by a vow which he pronounced before the rich altar, over which is a miraculous picture of the Blessed Virgin, in the church of the Annunziata at Florence. Mary showed how acceptable was the offering, by the abundant graces she obtained for the holy youth, who enjoyed in a special manner the privileges God ordinarily confers on pure souls. His greatest delight was to visit a church where his "dear mother" was specially venerated; and

from his twelfth year he fasted in her honour on bread and water on all Saturdays, as well as on all the vigils of her festivals. Under the influence of her inspiration, he resolved to renounce his princely title and expectations, and dedicate himself to God in the Society of Jesus; and he sought through her intercession strength to overcome the obstacles which the unwillingness of his father opposed to the performance of his resolution. He especially proposed to imitate the virtues of this most pure Virgin; and in his love of poverty, humility, obedience, purity, love of God and man, he endeavoured to prove himself a faithful child of his heavenly mother. The examples of Jesus and Mary were ever before his eyes, as the love of them was ever in his heart, and their sacred names continually on his lips. He died in the twenty-second year of his age,—young in years, but matured in virtue and perfection, and was proposed to the veneration of the faithful in 1626, by Benedict XIII., who solemnly canonized him. He may not be inaptly styled “the apostle of youth;” on account of the wonderful influence of his example, and of the tender affection with which the pious youth of all countries, most especially of Italy, cherish his memory.

PRAYER.

O Mary, thou art the most fruitful of mothers, and the chastest of Virgins. I venerate, with the most profound respect, the mysterious union of these prerogatives in thee; and I congratulate thee on thy exemption from all the miseries of our condition,—on thy spotless purity, and on

thy divine maternity for which it prepared thee. O Virgin Mother, protect me through thy heavenly purity, and defend me against so many enemies, who surround me, and seek to deprive me of this most precious possession. Obtain for me, most pure Virgin, the grace to aim at the perfection of this virtue, by cautious vigilance over my unruly passions, and by carefully avoiding whatever might render me unworthy to look up to thee as the model of my conduct, or prevent thee from recognising in me, a faithful and devoted child. O Mary, mother of pure souls, shew thyself a mother to me now and at the hour of my death, and bring me to the beatitude promised to those who are clean of heart—the contemplation and enjoyment of God in heaven. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Commit to memory, and frequently repeat, the following prayer, which is recommended by spiritual writers as a most efficacious remedy against temptation.

PRAYER.

“Through thy sacred virginity and immaculate conception, O most pure Virgin and Queen of Angels, obtain for me purity of soul and body, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”

ASPIRATION.

Shew thyself a Mother!

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SEVENTH DAY.

—
AMIALE MOTHER.*Pray for us.*

“ And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet, and called his name ‘ amiable to the Lord,’ because the Lord loved him.”—2 Kings, xii. 25.

This was the name given by God to Solomon at his birth; because he was the happy son of David from whom the Messiah was to descend, and because his reign was to be an illustrious type of the peaceful glories of the Messiah's kingdom. If the Lord loved so remote an ancestor of Christ, how much more “ amiable to the Lord” was that favoured creature, who conceived and brought him forth? When God created this world, and beheld all the things that he had made, he saw that they were good, and was pleased in the manifestation of His own divine perfections which they presented. In Mary he beheld a spotless creature, who, according to the scripture expression, “ although black was beautiful”—that is, who although belonging to a sinful race, was unsullied by the stain of sin, having been exempted, through the future merits of her divine Son, from contracting the guilt, and suffering the consequences, of Adam's prevarication. Hence Richard of St. Laurence writes: “ the Blessed Virgin was lovely even in the eyes of God.”

We cannot doubt but that our first parents

before their fall possessed natural advantages which we no longer enjoy. Mary, through the divine mercy, was not only placed in the same condition as if Adam had never fallen, but was, moreover, endowed with gifts, both of the natural and supernatural order, in some measure proportioned to the greatness of her destiny. Hence in the canticle of canticles, the spouse, by whom the holy fathers understand the blessed Virgin to be signified, is called "the fairest among women,"* and the daughters of Jerusalem are represented as struck with admiration at her beauty, and exclaiming, "Return, return, O Sulamitess, return, return, that we may behold thee."† If we admire the wisdom of God, exhibited in the beauty of the firmament, or in variety of wonders which the earth presents to our contemplation, how much more justly are we called on to admire the manifestation of the same divine perfections in this singularly favoured creature. "Who can refuse to love thee, O Mary," says St. Bonaventure; "thou art more beautiful than the sun; thou art sweeter than honey; to all thou art amiable, to all thou art gracious."

Mary was amiable beyond all other creatures, because beyond all other creatures she reflected the divine perfections in the moral qualities of her nature. All that we can conceive of suavity of disposition, gentleness of nature, and kindness of manner, were found in her in a degree far surpassing our conceptions. How many hearts must she have attracted to God by the amiability of her deportment, in which every thing indicated

* Cant. i. 7.

† Cant. iv. 1.

exalted purity and godliness ! Her look, according to St. Ambrose, inspired all who beheld it with a love of purity. How many sinners have been converted to God, and how many holy souls incited to renewed zeal for their salvation, by beholding the representation of the sweet countenance of this most amiable mother, who clasps the divine infant to her breast, and looks down, with an expression of mild rebuke, on those who esteem so little the excess of that love wherewith he has loved them ! Who has ever looked at these prodigies of the painter's pencil, in which are expressed such unearthly beauty and such sweet benignity, without ejaculating an aspiration to this most amiable, because most perfect of creatures ? Let us endeavour to imitate her virtue as far as is given to our weakness : and, by showing forth the gifts of grace in the conduct of our lives, induce our fellow-creatures to glorify our Father who is in heaven. Let the amiable character of Mary not only serve to excite us to virtue, but let it moreover give us great confidence in our applications for her intercession. If the recollection of our infidelities to God makes us dread to approach Him, let us fly like children to our most amiable Mother, according to the council of a holy writer, Hugh of St. Victor. " If you dread to approach God, look up to Mary. In her you will see nothing that can terrify you. She is of the same race as you yourselves are."

EXAMPLE.

A celebrated missionary, Father Gonzales Silveira, brought with him to the kingdom of Mono-

matapa, in Africa, a beautiful picture of the blessed Virgin. One of the officers of the court saw it, and not knowing how to distinguish the picture from reality, told his prince that the strange priest had brought with him a lady of singular beauty. The king conceived a great desire to see her, and sent accordingly to Father Gonzales, who immediately brought him the painting, and told him that this was the lady the officer had seen. The king was so charmed with it, that he placed it under a rich canopy in his own chamber. On the following night, while he slept tranquilly, he seemed to behold the virgin surrounded with light, in the same dress and similarly ornamented as in the picture. She addressed him in a language he did not understand. This happened on three successive nights. He was so annoyed at not understanding what the unknown lady said to him, that he interrogated the missionary on the subject. This latter replied that the language of the Queen of Heaven was a heavenly language, and could only be understood by a Christian. "Well then," said the king, "I will be a Christian, since it is so agreeable to the Queen of Heaven." He was accordingly instructed in the principles of our holy faith, and was solemnly baptized, together with his mother, and many of the nobles of his court. He then learned that the incomprehensible language of the Queen of Heaven was the means she had made use of to induce him to become a Christian; and he esteemed this character too much not to be ever thankful to her by whose means he had obtained it.

PRAYER.*

“O blessed Mary, who can return thee sufficient thanks, or adequately celebrate thy praises, for having by thy consent succoured a ruined world? What praise can human weakness offer to thee, which by thy means has found the port of salvation? Receive, however, our thanks, although unworthy of thee and unequal to thy merits, and obtain for us pardon by thy intercession. Receive our prayers within the sanctuary of thy clemency, and procure for us the antidote of reconciliation. May our offerings be rendered acceptable through thy intercession, and may we obtain what we confidentially ask. Receive what we offer; impart what we desire; avert what we fear: for thou art the only hope of sinners. Through thee do we hope for pardon of our sins; and in thee, O most blessed lady! is the expectation of our rewards. Holy Mary! succour the miserable, help the pusillanimous, comfort the mournful, pray for the people, intercede for the clergy, pray for the devoted female sex, and let all experience thy intercession who celebrate thy holy conception. Amen.”

PRACTICE.

Keep always a picture of this most amiable Mother in your room, and when it meets your eye, make an aspiration of love to Jesus and to Mary.

ASPIRATION.

How beautiful art thou, O my beloved! How beautiful art thou.—Cant. iv. 1.

* Ascribed to St. Augustine.

EIGHTH DAY.

MOTHER OF OUR CREATOR,

Pray for us.

“He who created me, rested in my tabernacle.”—
 Eccl. xxiv. 12.

“It is indeed,” says St. Chrysostom, “an unheard-of wonder, that the ineffable God, whose greatness cannot be conceived by thought or expressed in language, and who is equal to the Father in all things, should come to us by the womb of the Virgin, and vouchsafe to be born of a woman.” When we before considered the dignity of Mary, as Mother of God, we rather explained the doctrine of the church, than dwelt on the consequences which follow from this truth. Mary is the mother of our Creator; because she is the mother of Jesus Christ—who is the brightness of His (the Father’s) glory, and the figure of His substance;* who was in the beginning with God; by whom “all things were made, and without whom was made nothing that was made;”† and “who is over all things God blessed for ever.”‡ She then can say, and the expression is strictly true: “He who created me rested in my tabernacle.” O sublime and mysterious privilege!

* Heb. i. 3. † John, i. 3. ‡ Rom. ix. 5.

The dignity of Mary is infinite, inasmuch as it results from the infinite dignity of her divine son, which no created intelligence can comprehend. The angels who stand before the throne of God ; the seraphim who veil their faces before the splendours of His presence, and exclaim, " Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts, the heavens and the earth are full of thy glory ;" the spirits of the just made perfect who are inebriated with torrents of delight in contemplating and enjoying God ; — these have an idea of Mary's dignity, infinitely more correct than we can possibly have, but yet infinitely short of its real character. For as none but God can fully comprehend the perfection of His own nature, none but God can duly estimate the greatness of her who stands to Him in the close and endearing relation of mother.

This dignity is so great that St. Bonaventure did not hesitate to say, what, on a moment's reflection, must appear evident to all ; " that although God could create a thousand worlds more beautiful than the one we inhabit, yet he could not create a greater mother ;" because her dignity as Mother depends on the dignity of her Son ; and what mother can be greater than the Mother of God ? Hence the holy fathers, and other saints of God's church, in proportion as they meditated on, and endeavoured to conceive, the Majesty of God, in the same proportion increased in respect and profound veneration for that singularly favoured creature who was chosen to be the Mother of God. " Mary," says St. Bernard, " calls the God and Lord of angels, her Son : ' Son, why hast thou done so to us.' What angel would dare to say this ? But Mary showing that she is mother,

confidently calls that God her Son, whom the angels humbly adore." In contemplating this incomprehensible elevation of Mary, let us address her with sentiments of admiration and profound reverence, in the words of her holy cousin St. Elizabeth: "Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished which were spoken to thee by the Lord."* "Although we had innumerable tongues," says a very ancient author, "we could not sufficiently praise her. This is she who alone merits to be called by God, spouse and mother. She first repaired the evil of our first mother, and brought salvation to lost man."

The greatness of Mary's dignity is best calculated to give us an idea of her super-eminent sanctity. God, who always adapts the means to the end, prepared her for a dignity without parallel, by a degree of sanctity as far exceeding that of other saints, as the dignity of mother exceeds that of friends and servants. "Wherefore," says St. Bernard, "it was meet that the Creator of men, when he assumed the nature of man, should choose, or rather create, such a mother among all, as He knew was worthy of Him, and would please Him." St. Gregory the Great mystically interprets the mount of Ephraim, mentioned in the first book of Kings, of Mary; "She was a mountain," says he, "which rose above all other created height, by the dignity of her election."—"Was not Mary," says he again, "a lofty mountain, who, that she might be worthy to conceive the Eternal Word, was raised above all the choirs

* Luke, i. 45.

of angels, and approached the very throne of the Godhead? Isaiah, foretelling the superexcellent elevation of this mountain, says: 'And in the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the summit of the mountains.' It was indeed a mountain on the mountain's top; because the elevation of Mary shone resplendent above that of all the saints." But the supereminent dignity and sanctity of Mary should not be the matter for mere admiration;—it should serve to impress us more deeply with a sense of the greatness of the God whose creatures we are, and who, in our creation, has imposed on us the obligation of being holy, as he said to the Jewish people: "Be ye holy; because I, the Lord your God, am holy."

EXAMPLE.

In the fifth century of the Church, Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, a proud and haughty man, who concealed much impiety under an appearance of zeal and piety, displayed at length the venom of his heart by preaching publicly in the church, that it was not permitted to call Mary the Mother of God. The people heard this impiety with the greatest consternation. All Constantinople was excited; and the faithful were indignant at the insult offered to Mary, by attempting to deprive her of a title which had been given her from the days of the apostles. Venerable old men, who in the desert had spent their lives in the practice of the severest austerities, now abandoned their retreats, and appeared in the streets and public assemblies, to defend the honour of the

Queen of Heaven, and to caution the people against the impious errors of Nestorius. The bishops and pastors of the church, well knowing that the whole mystery of human redemption would be annihilated, if the error of Nestorius prevailed, undertook the defence of Mary's dignity with the greatest zeal. A general council was held at Ephesus, in 431, at which bishops from various countries assisted, and over which St. Cyril, the patriarch of Alexandria, presided, as legate of Pope Celestine. The error of Nestorius was condemned, and he himself anathematized as an innovator. It is difficult to describe the joy and exultation which this decision of the Church excited in Ephesus and throughout all Christendom. On the day in which the decree of the council, on the nature of Mary's dignity, was solemnly announced, almost the whole city assembled before the church where the bishops were assembled. The people patiently awaited the whole day, as if nothing was more important or dearer to their hearts than the determination of this question. At length the doors being thrown open, St. Cyril appeared at the head of more than two hundred bishops, and announced to the people the condemnation of Nestorius and his impious doctrine. Scarcely had he ceased to speak, when the multitude burst into exclamations of joy, and the whole city resounded with hymns and congratulations to Mary.—“The enemy of Mary is overcome,” they exclaimed. “Joy to Mary, the great, the sublime, the glorious Mother of God!” The fathers of the council were received by the people with loud praises, and conducted home, accompanied by innumerable torches. Costly perfumes were burned in the

streets through which they passed ; the whole city was illuminated ; and nothing was omitted to render the triumph of Mary complete. It was on this occasion that the Church added to the angel's salutation the words : " Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death." Amen.

PRAYER.

I salute thee, O Mary, Mother of my Creator, and hope of Christians. Listen to the prayer of a sinner, who wishes to love thee tenderly, and who places in thee all his hope of salvation. To thee I owe all the spiritual advantages which Jesus Christ has procured for me : re-instate me in the favour of thy Divine Son, and be the advocate of my weakness and unworthiness. I beseech thee to obtain from Him the pardon of all my sins : dissipate the darkness of my understanding, destroy the worldly affections of my heart, repel the temptations of my enemy, and preside over all the actions of my life, that by thy assistance and maternal direction, I may arrive at eternal happiness. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Exercise this day some act of humility in honour of Mary.

ASPIRATION.

Make me worthy to praise thee, O Sacred Virgin !

NINTH DAY.

MOTHER OF OUR REDEEMER.*Pray for us.*

“ And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. For he shall save his people from their sins.”—Matth. i. 21.

The titles on which Mary claims our respect and gratitude are so many, that it is only by considering them separately, we can form to ourselves adequate ideas, or correct notions, of them. If she challenges all our veneration, on account of the supereminent dignity as Mother of God, she is entitled to all our gratitude as Mother of our Redeemer. As Eve was the cause of the ruin of the human race, because although her own transgression would not have involved us in her guilt and its consequent punishment, yet she was the occasion of the fall of Adam, who was seduced by her example and solicitation ; so Mary is properly styled by the holy fathers, “ the cause of our salvation,” because although of herself she could not have reconciled us with God, yet in giving us Jesus Christ, she has afforded us a Redeemer, who is “ a propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but for those of the whole world.” St. Irenæus, who lived in the second century of the church, says : “ As Eve, by disobeying, became for herself and the whole human race the cause of

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ruin, so Mary, by obeying, became the cause of salvation to herself and the whole human race."* "Eve," says St. Augustin, "was the cause of death to man, for by her death entered into the world; but Mary is the cause of life, by whom life was born to us, and by whom the Son of God came into the world; that where sin had abounded there grace should abound, and whence death originated thence life might proceed; and that He who was made life for us by a woman, should overcome the death brought on by a woman." St. Jerom expressed the same thought in fewer words: "Death came by Eve; life by Mary."

What a momentous mission was that on which the archangel Gabriel was sent to Mary, when he announced to her that she should conceive and bear a son, who was to be called Jesus, because he was to "save his people from their sins."

On the assent of the Virgin to the proposition made her, hung the destinies of the human race. How the angels of God must have paused in breathless expectation of her answer! and when they heard issue from her mouth the words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done unto me according to thy word;" how the vaults of heaven resounded with the glorious anthem of Glory to God on high and peace to men of good will," which, on the night of Christ's nativity, re-echoed from the earth! What would have been our condition if Mary had not yielded this ready compliance with God's will? We have every reason to conclude, that man would not have been redeemed. God could, of course, have employed

* S. Iren.: lib. iii. c. xxxiii.

other means; but there is nothing to make us believe that he would have done so. On the contrary, all that we know of the ordinary course of his providence, tends to warrant the contrary inference. He has established an admirable order of dependence between the different members of the human family: the vices or virtues of the parent have a serious effect on the morality of his offspring; and no man can wander from the path of duty, or walk steadily in it, without exercising a favourable or unfavourable influence on others. Mary then merits all our gratitude, for having fulfilled the glorious designs which God had on her. St. Bernard, addressing her, says: "By means of thee has heaven been opened and hell closed, the heavenly Jerusalem restored, and life given to those who expected death." We cannot have a due conviction of the benefit of the redemption which Christ has effected for us, and not have a deep sense of our obligations to her, who was so mysteriously instrumental in procuring them.

If Mary had so great a part in our redemption, we may easily conceive that she will be most zealous for the application of its benefits to our souls. We cannot employ a surer means of being purified in the blood of her Son, than by frequent recourse to her: she knows the value of the gift we seek, and our inevitable ruin unless we obtain it. "Mary," says Venerable Bede, "stands in the presence of her Son, and never ceases to intercede for sinners."* She knows our misery: she feels every wound we inflict on Jesus Christ by

* Bede in Cap. 1. Lucæ.

our transgressions: she compassionates our unhappy lot, if we fail to profit by the plentiful redemption she has procured for us through Jesus Christ. Hence she is styled by St. Ephrem, "the conciliatrix of the world." Hence St. Basil asserts, that God has ordained that she should assist us in every thing.* And is it not reasonable, that she who had so mysterious a part in the accomplishment of man's redemption, should have the most extensive influence in the application of its merits to our souls? Let us, then, ever accompany our meditation on our redemption through Christ, and our petitions to be washed in His blood, with corresponding gratitude to Mary, and unlimited confidence in her intercession. Let us address her in the language of St. Ephrem: "Hail, hope of the soul, firm confidence of Christians, advocate of sinners, bulwark of the faithful, and cause of the world's salvation!"

EXAMPLE.

On Sunday, the 3d of September, 1837, a captain of the French army, about forty-four years old, was passing by the church of *Notre Dame des Victoires*, in Paris, at half-past seven in the evening. He entered through curiosity, and went up to the altar dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Mary. The preacher in speaking of St. Augustin, whose festival was then celebrated, had occasion to mention Africa and Rome: and the officer, who had served in the Italian campaign, and had just returned from Algiers, re-

* S. Basil de annuntiatione Beatæ Virginia.

membered the names of many places which he had seen, or in the neighbourhood of which he had been. This made him take an interest in the discourse, and remain till it was over. At the end of the service, the priest bade the "association of the Heart of Mary," pray for the conversion of whoever among those present stood most in need of it. The captain felt that he was the one whom this designation best suited; he was much moved, and fell on his knees to pray. On the following day he visited the director of the association, and gave him an exact account of what had occurred the preceding evening. "What particularly struck me," said he, "was that St. Augustin, when he was converted, prepared himself to receive baptism by retiring to Cassi. I know Cassi, it is a village, almost entirely consisting of taverns, near Milan. I have often gone there to dance, and amuse myself. What a contrast! said I to myself: St. Augustin went there to do penance, and I to indulge my passions. I am not yet a Christian, I have not been baptized." Such was really the case, owing to the indifference of his father. He now felt a strong desire to imitate the repentance of St. Augustin, and expressed a wish to receive holy baptism. He prepared for it with great fervour; and, in a few days, received it, as also the sacraments of confirmation and the eucharist. His heart was overflowing with gratitude to his divine Saviour and his holy Mother, and he resolved to practise the duties of his religion, and show himself to be a practical Catholic during the rest of his life.*

* Manuel d'instructions et prieres. Paris, 1839.

PRAYER.

O most holy Mother of our Redeemer, what deep gratitude do Christians owe thee for thy instrumentality in our redemption! In giving us Jesus Christ, thou hast given us a Redeemer who is flesh of thy flesh—over whom, as mother, thou hadst dominion—but whom thou didst willingly deliver up for our salvation. Yes, holy Mother, if we owe all to Jesus Christ, who has redeemed us, to thee we owe Jesus himself; as it was thy obedience to God's will that caused the designs of His ineffable mercy to be accomplished. O thrice happy Virgin, thou dost dispense thy favours with liberality and love. I recommend myself to thee; and as thou hast the dispensation of the inexhaustible treasures of God's grace, by thy influence with Jesus, impart them to me, with a liberality corresponding to my great necessities. Suffer not a soul to be lost for which Christ died. Through thy intercession may I experience the application of His saving merits on earth, and, through them, attain the eternal happiness, which he has purchased for me by His blood. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Be exact in saying the "Angelus Domini" at morning, noon, and night, in commemoration of, and thanksgiving for, the benefit of redemption.

ASPIRATION.

Heart of Mary, compassionate the obduracy of my heart!

TENTH DAY.

VIRGIN MOST PRUDENT,

Pray for us.

"This woman was most prudent."—1 Kings, xxv. 3.

The Holy Ghost pronounced this eulogium on the virtues of Abigail, whose prudence enabled her to bear with the imperfections of her husband, Nabal, and to appease the anger of David. Her prudence was, however, but imperfect, when compared with that which we admire and venerate in Mary. This prudence was manifested first, by devoting herself to God's service at an early age; when she was presented by her holy parents in the temple of God, where she remained occupied in the meditation of His law, and in the celebration of His divine perfections. The church applies to her the praise which our Divine Saviour pronounced on Mary, the sister of Martha, when this latter complained, that her sister remained at the feet of Christ, in silent contemplation of the divine wisdom: "Martha was busy about much serving," and most modern Christians would, probably, conceive, that she was more meritoriously employed than her sister. The divine lips of Jesus have, however, pronounced the eulogium of the latter: "Mary hath chosen the better part, which shall

not be taken away from her." The blessed Virgin, in choosing "the better part," manifested her singular prudence; as this is a virtue which guides us in the choice of objects, and in the selection of the means to attain them. Her excellence in this particular is the more remarkable, as she had no example to imitate, but was the first to give the example of a total and perpetual voluntary sacrifice of herself to the divine service. May we learn from it to choose ever the better part, according to the measure of grace imparted to us; and ever esteem it as the greatest happiness and the most consummate wisdom, to be occupied on earth as the blessed are in heaven—in contemplating and adoring the divine perfections! Happy those souls who are called to this life "hidden with Christ in God."

In the other circumstances of Mary's life, we perceive no less evidence of her prudence. So far removed was she from every thing that could diminish the lustre of this virtue, that when her spouse, St. Joseph, perceived her pregnancy, he seems rather to have been involved in perplexity, than inclined to suspicion. Mary, with the fullest reliance on God, does not seem to have made any effort to vindicate her innocence; but patiently awaited the supernatural manifestation of her divine maternity. Again, although she appears not often in the evangelical history of our Lord, whenever she is mentioned, we may perceive the prudence which distinguished her. After remaining three months with her holy cousin, St. Elizabeth, she returns to Nazareth, when the time of the birth of St. John the Baptist approached; in order, as the holy fathers remark, to avoid the ob-

servation of those who would be assembled on such a joyous occasion. Like the prudent merchant in the gospel, she studiously concealed the precious jewel she possessed, and did not unnecessarily expose it, by imprudently manifesting the extraordinary favour God had imparted to her. She treasured up all the words spoken of her Divine Son, by the angels on the night of his birth, pondering on them in her heart, as also those which the prophetess Anna and the holy Simeon pronounced, when He was presented in the temple. During the public ministry of Christ she seldom appears, as best became her sex, and her near relation to the Redeemer; but whenever we find mention of her, we may gather from the brief notice which the evangelists take of her, the evidences of her singular prudence.

The prudence of Mary should be for us a subject of close imitation. Whenever we have either to choose a state of life, or determine on any important matter, what are the motives by which we are influenced? To act prudently on these occasions, we should act on the principle laid down by Christ, in his answer to Martha: "There is indeed one thing necessary." This is the criterion by which we should try and prove all things. Whatever conduces to the great end of our creation—the attainment of heaven should be embraced; whatever is opposed to it, or likely to place obstacles to us in our course, should be rejected. To act otherwise—to be influenced by considerations of present gratification or emolument, and not by the principle above laid down, is to invert the order established by God, who commands us to "seek first the kingdom of God

and his justice." It is to lay the foundation of our happiness on a sandy soil, and thus expose ourselves to be involved in the ruin that will certainly follow. Even in our most trivial actions we should be governed by prudence, as it is the only means by which we can please God, and avoid the violation of fraternal charity. The words of the psalmist should often be our aspiration to God:—"Set a watch, O Lord! before my mouth, and a door round my lips." Let us imitate this truly prudent Virgin, whose example the church so much recommends to our imitation, and from whom we may learn prudence without guile, and wisdom without affectation.

EXAMPLE.

St. Alphonso de Liguori was, in the early part of his life, a distinguished lawyer; but having lost an important suit, which had occupied his attention for an entire month, and which he was certain of gaining, he felt a disgust for the world, and resolved to embrace the ecclesiastical state. He was subsequently founder of the order of the Liguorists, otherwise called 'Redemptionists,' whose principal object is to announce the truths of salvation to the poor. He was afterwards made bishop of St. Agatha dei Goti, in the kingdom of Naples.

Never did this man of God permit a day to pass without spending some time before an altar dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. He never undertook any thing, however trivial, without invoking her, whom he called his Mother, and, after God, his only hope. Often in his sermons did he speak in the most touching manner of this Mother of

sorrows. "At the foot of the cross," he would say, "she adopted us in the person of John. By the sword which pierced her heart, she is become for us a Mother of mercy; let us therefore, poor sinners, have recourse to her in our pressing dangers."

In his missions he was accustomed to give a sermon on the patronage of the Holy Virgin, which always produced most happy results. Often, on such occasions, did the most hardened sinners feel themselves touched by grace; and, in amazement at their change of feeling, demand with earnestness to be admitted to penance. The zeal of this great saint redoubled whenever the devotion to his good Mother was attacked. "Some innovators," he would say, "assert that the veneration given to the Virgin is injurious to God: they deny her influence; they reject her intercession. It is our duty to vindicate her privileges." He proved, after St. Bernard and other fathers of the Church, that a *true* servant of Mary cannot be lost; because such a one must necessarily fulfil all the conditions required by God for salvation. The number of prayers, and beautiful hymns, which he composed in her honour, and numerous works of piety, especially his "Glories of Mary," and his "Visits to the Holy Virgin," attest his extraordinary devotion to the Mother of God. Several well authenticated miraculous favours which God conferred on him through Mary, are recorded in his life, published in Italy and France.

This glorious saint, who from his childhood had asked every day, through the intercession of Mary, for the grace of a happy death, was consoled in his last moments by a vision of the Queen

of Heaven. Holding a crucifix in his hand, and with the image of Mary before him, he calmly expired in the ninetieth year of his age, in 1787. He was canonized by the present Pope, Gregory XVI., on the 26th of May, 1839.

PRAYER.

O most prudent Virgin, I approach thee with sentiments of the most profound veneration, and I congratulate thee on the heavenly prudence, which thou didst manifest from thy earliest years, and which always distinguished thee through life. Thou art the prudent Virgin, who didst seek God in all thy actions, and ever kept thy lamp burning, by continually replenishing it with the oil of good works. May I imitate thee in this respect, and not expose myself to be excluded, like the foolish virgins, from the nuptials of the Divine Son, by reason of my tepidity or want of vigilance. O Virgin, bright mirror of heavenly wisdom! be unto me a guide, and make me ever prefer what is most conducive to my salvation, to what would flatter my pride or gratify my feelings. Preserve me from those errors in which passion would involve me: may I be simple and prudent, sincere without levity, and reserved without moroseness. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Make it a rule in all your actions, especially those of moment, to examine what influence they will have on your eternal destinies. Let this be the criterion by which you judge of them.

ASPIRATION.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of death!

ELEVENTH DAY.

VENERABLE VIRGIN,

Pray for us.

“ All Generations shall call me blessed.”—
Luke, i. 48.

When holy Elizabeth congratulated the blessed Virgin, on the supernatural favour she had received from God, this humble handmaid of the Lord, inspired by the Holy Ghost, composed that canticle of thanksgiving from which these words are taken. How wonderful was this prophecy! A poor Virgin, distinguished by nothing except her extraordinary piety, foretells that “ all generations shall call her blessed.” And so fully has this prediction been accomplished, that its fulfilment may be considered as one of the strongest proofs of our divine religion. We can say to her, as Ozias, the prince of the people, said to Judith, “ Blessed art thou, daughter, by the Lord, the Most High God, above all women upon the earth. Because He hath so magnified thy name this day, that thy praise shall not depart out of the mouth

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of men, who shall be mindful of the power of the Lord for ever ; for that thou hast not spared thy life, by reason of the distress and tribulation of thy people, but hast prevented our ruin in the presence of our God.”*

Yes, all generations have called her blessed ! When peace was restored to the church by the triumph of Constantine, and the Christians were permitted to raise public churches for the worship of God, the piety of the faithful towards the Mother of their Redeemer manifested itself in the numerous and magnificent temples erected to her honour. The council of Ephesus, in which she was declared to be justly styled the “ Mother of God,” against the heretic Nestorius, was held in one of those churches which religion had raised to God under her invocation. How many holy doctors, in every age, have consecrated their talents to celebrate her praises ! Like St. Bernard, they could find no end of speaking of Mary ; for the more they considered her dignity and holiness, the more they found themselves incapable of adequately expressing them. The eloquence of orators, the genius of poets, the talents of painters and sculptors—not only in one age or country—but in every age and country where Christianity has been known—have combined to celebrate her praises, and transmit to future generations the feelings of religious veneration which they themselves experienced. What a multitude of religious orders have been instituted in her honour, and under her special patronage ! In these, thousands of holy souls daily repeat the canticle of praise

* Judith, xiii. 23, 25.

and thanksgiving to God, which first fell from Mary's lips, and—esteeming themselves honoured in being accounted her servants—faithfully endeavour to copy into their lives the lessons of obedience, purity, and humility, which she gives to all Christians. The church of Jesus Christ has instituted numerous festivals in her honour, and in commemoration of the benefits conferred on us through her instrumentality. In a word, the praises of Mary have been celebrated by all that in ancient or modern times is venerable for the sanctity of their own lives, and the wonders of God's power displayed in their actions. Truly, then, have all generations called her blessed. As God has not bestowed on any other creature such abundant graces or favours as on Mary, so he has not given to any other creature to enjoy such universal and heart-felt admiration as to the Virgin Mother of His Son. Let us, then, join in this universal voice of Christian piety; and, uniting our praises with those of all the just on earth, and of all the angels and saints of heaven, say to her with St. Cyril of Alexandria: "Praise be to thee, O holy Mother of God! Thou art the precious jewel of the earth, an undying lamp, the crown of virginity, the sceptre of the orthodox faith. Thou art an inviolable temple, containing Him whom no space can include."

This veneration, with which Christians of all ages have honoured the Virgin Mary, and which is so much encouraged by the church, is most reasonable in itself, and most efficaciously promotes the greater glory of God. If all the friends

of God were much honoured by the psalmist,* how much more worthy of veneration is she whom Jesus Christ himself honoured as his parent on earth? The glory which Mary receives from us, does not detract from, but, on the contrary, augments, that which we are bound to give to God. "Whatever praise," says St. Bernard, "we give to the Mother, is referred to the Son; for the King is honoured by the respect manifested for the Queen." It is the triumph of God's grace we celebrate, when we celebrate the praises of Mary. Hence St. Gregory, of Nicomedia, addressing her, says, "The creator regards thy glory as his own." If the saints have venerated her so much, and have found themselves unable to express all their feelings of respect and affection for her, it was because they had such sublime ideas of God's majesty and goodness. To honour her, is to honour God; whose creature she is, and from whom, consequently, she has received all that she possesses. To confide in her, is not to distrust His providence or mercy; but to employ the most powerful means to obtain what we ask for from both these divine attributes. "The dignity of the intercessor," says St. Anselm, "supplies our insufficiency, and hence to implore the assistance of the Virgin is not to distrust the divine mercy, but to diffide in our own unworthiness." In honouring Mary we only accomplish the designs of God, who by her mouth has declared—what he has not declared of any other creature—"that all generations should call her blessed."

* Ps. cxxxviii. 17.

EXAMPLE.

The church honours on this day the memory of St. Francis Hieronymus of the Society of Jesus, who may be called the apostle of the kingdom, and especially of the city, of Naples. He was a most faithful servant of Mary; he had for her the most tender affection, and incessantly laboured to excite similar feelings in others. On all Saturdays of the year, as well as on all Vigils of the Blessed Virgin, he fasted on bread and water; not to speak of other austerities he practised in honour of Mary. In the church of the Jesuits at Naples, there is an image of the Holy Virgin, sent thither from Rome by St. Francis of Borgia, and which is venerated under the title of "Mary the greater." This holy man exerted himself wonderfully to direct the attention of the people to it; and to excite among them sentiments of tender confidence in the Mother of God. For twenty-two years he continued to preach on every Tuesday in a church dedicated to God in her honour; and laid before the people the extraordinary privileges of Mary, and the liberality with which she rewarded her faithful servants. He was especially zealous in exciting youth to the practice of this devotion; as he deemed it the most powerful means of guarding their innocence, or of correcting their errors. He was often accustomed to say, that whoever did not honour Mary could with difficulty be saved. In all doubts and difficulties, he recurred to her as his sure counsellor; and in her found protection in all his dangers, assistance in all his undertakings, help and relief in all his embarrassments. Never did he appeal to her without being heard. In his

missionary sermons he always caused an image of Mary to be placed before the people ; thereby to draw down the blessing of heaven on his ministry, and to lead his hearers to Jesus through Mary. It is inconceivable what great things this apostolic man performed by the assistance of Mary, or how many souls he won to heaven by means of his untiring zeal. Devotion to Mary was propagated wherever duty called him to labour for the salvation of souls. The mother of mercy did not let his zeal pass unrewarded. After having aided and protected him during life, she assisted him in a special manner at the hour of his death, which occurred in Naples in the year 1716. He was beatified by Pius VII., in 1806, and was solemnly canonized by the present Pope, Gregory XVI., on the 26th of May, 1839. Let us learn from St. Francis, to love and honour this most Venerable Virgin, and we shall experience the truth of his maxim, that the faithful servant of Mary cannot be lost.

PRAYER.

O Most Venerable Virgin ! I salute thee as the most honoured of God's creatures, and therefore venerate thee with all the fervour of my soul. There is no other creature in heaven or on earth, that can be compared with thee. May all tongues proclaim thy praise. I rejoice at thy super-eminent glory, whenever I repeat that canticle in which thou didst foretel, that all generations should call thee blessed. O blessed indeed art thou amongst all creatures ! May I ever remain thy faithful, thy devoted servant on earth, that,

by thy intercession, I may hereafter deserve to behold that glory with which God crowns thee in heaven, and return thanks to Him, during eternity, for all the favours he has conferred on thee, and, through thee, on all mankind. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Recite the "Magnificat" in honour of Mary, and endeavour both by exhortation and your own example to promote devotion to this Venerable Virgin. It is the surest means by which you can obtain God's grace.

ASPIRATION.

Thou art beautiful and comely, O daughter of Jerusalem!



TWELFTH DAY.



POWERFUL VIRGIN,

Pray for us.

"In thy hands are power and might."—1 Paralip, xxix. 12.

The Holy Virgin is most powerful with Jesus Christ. While on earth this Divine Saviour was subject to her, and obeyed her as his Mother; according to St. Luke, he "went down with

them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them."* She is His Mother no less in heaven now, than she was while on earth. How powerful then must Mary be with her Divine Son! "The son," says St. Bernard, "will surely hear the Mother." When Solomon, who was a type of Christ, saw his mother approach, he rose from his throne, bowed to her, and ordered her to be seated on a throne at his right hand. When she intimated that she had a petition to make, he replied: "My Mother, ask, for I must not turn away my face."† If this great king thus honoured his mother, and gave her such influence over him, although she was a poor sinful creature, —how much more efficacious with Jesus will be the prayer of Mary, who has not only the natural influence of a mother, but whose perfect holiness must render her so acceptable to God, the author and rewarder of all sanctity? May we not then say, in the language of the learned and truly pious Cardinal Bellarmin: "How secure must we be, when protected by so great a mother? Who will draw us from her? What temptation or affliction can overcome those who confide in the protection of her who is the Mother of God, and our Mother also?"

We have a striking instance of Mary's power with her Divine Son recorded in the gospel of St. John.‡ At the marriage feast of Cana of Galilee, when the wine was exhausted, she represented to Him that they had no wine. Although He declared that His hour was not yet come for manifesting Himself to the world, yet, in compliance

* Luke, ii. 51. † 3 Reg. ii. 20. ‡ John, ii.

with her request, he changed water into wine, which was the beginning of his wonders. Is Mary likely to be less powerful with Him now, that his hour for applying the fruits of his redemption is come, than she was then? Will He be less moved with her representation of our spiritual necessities, than He was by her charitable interference on the occasion referred to? Or will she be less likely to interest herself for us, when she beholds the multiplied dangers which surround us, and our own spiritual destitution, than she was to prevent the confusion and disappointment of the guests at the marriage feast? We may be assured that Mary will plead for us with her Son still more effectually than she did at the marriage feast. Will the Eternal Father refuse any thing to Her, on whom He has accumulated so many favours, who was ever obedient to His commands, and whom He made use of in the great work of the incarnation of His Son? Will the Holy Ghost, by whose mysterious power she conceived Jesus Christ, who always dwelt in her by grace, and who always found her so docile to His inspirations—will He refuse her, when she petitions for a communication of the same grace to our souls? Or will Jesus, the amiable Saviour of mankind, reject the entreaties of her, who brought Him forth, who nursed His infancy and cared His childhood, and who, in all the circumstances of His life, from Bethlehem to Calvary, participated in His labours and sufferings for the redemption of the world? We cannot reflect on these motives of confidence in Mary, without entering into the sentiments of St. Bonaventure :

"It is the great privilege of Mary to be most powerful with her Divine Son."

The efficacy of Mary's intercession has been experienced and celebrated in all ages of the Church. By means of it have the most hardened sinners been converted, and, by the fervour of their penance have consoled the Church, which they had before scandalized by their disorders. By it has many a wavering heart been confirmed in its virtue, many a tepid soul been roused to the practice of virtue, and many a faithful servant been excited to go from virtue to virtue, and make renewed efforts to attain perfection. Why, then, has it not produced in us similar effects? We shall find, perhaps, that our tepidity, or neglect of her service, and the want of fidelity and fervour in our devotional practices to Mary, are the causes of the little benefit we may have derived from the appeals we have hitherto made to her. Let us animate ourselves to increased exactness in all that appertain to her service, and with St. Bernard, "venerate Mary with all our heart and affection, because such is the will of Him who has been pleased to give us all through Mary. Let us then adhere to her, and not let her go, until she bless us; FOR SHE IS POWERFUL."

EXAMPLE.

In the seventeenth century lived a holy priest, Father Bernard, who distinguished himself by his love of poverty and his charitable care of the poor, and whose name is famous in France as "the poor priest." He was born at Dijon, on the 26th December, 1588. After a youth spent in the fri-

volity of the world, he was converted, and received the order of priesthood at Paris, on which occasion he consecrated himself by vow to the service of the poor and suffering. In the early part of his new career, he suffered much from the repugnance he felt in visiting the public hospitals; but he at length so far overcame himself, as to behold without emotion the most disgusting objects.

He constantly visited the prisons in Paris, and endeavoured to inspire their inmates with sentiments of resignation, of penitence, and Christian hope. At the end of his exhortations, he caused all to sing the 'Salve Regina.' Father Bernard was particularly zealous in promoting the recital of the celebrated prayer of St. Bernard to the Mother of God—"Memorare"—"*Remember, O most pious Virgin.*" He caused it to be translated into various languages; and distributed more than two hundred thousand copies of this excellent prayer, by means of which he effected innumerable conversions.

One day he accompanied to the scaffold a hardened culprit, who, even then, ceased not to blaspheme. The good priest followed him to the ladder, and made an effort to embrace him. The other pushed him back so violently as to knock him down. Although much hurt by the fall, Bernard arose, and falling on his knees, began his favourite prayer, "*Remember, O most pious Virgin.*" The impenitent culprit immediately burst into tears, and gave every sign of a sincere repentance.

On another occasion, Father Bernard visited a prisoner under sentence of death, who refused to approach the sacrament of penance. He saluted

the unhappy man ; exhorted him to hope in God, and menaced him with the divine judgments in case he continued obstinate. The other remained unmoved. He begged him to recite at least a short prayer to Mary : he refused. Then he himself began his favourite prayer, in the hope that the prisoner would join him, but the unhappy man remained silent. Not dismayed by his want of success, the holy man persisted in his efforts, and at length triumphed over the obstinacy of the object of so much zeal. Scarcely had he pronounced the first words of the above-mentioned prayer, than the other burst into tears, and manifested the deepest compunction.

PRAYER.

O most powerful, because most faithful, of God's creatures ! I presume to approach thee with a lively sentiment of my own unworthiness to address God, whose indignation I have so much deserved ; and with a strong conviction in the efficacy of thy intercession with Jesus, thy Divine Son, who has placed in thy hands all power and strength. May these sentiments always increase within me, that I may never presume on my own strength, but place all my confidence in thee. Obtain for me, O Glorious Virgin, a sincere conversion, strength and resolution in the hour of trial, and the grace of final perseverance. Jesus can refuse thee nothing ; whereas my iniquities render my prayers unworthy of being regarded by Him. Thou hast crushed the head of the infernal serpent, and snatched from him the prey which he hoped to possess for ever. O powerful Mary, preserve me

against the rude assaults by which he endeavours to regain what he has lost ; and do not permit me ever more to relapse into my former state of servitude. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Resolve to show your confidence in the powerful protection of Mary, by invoking her assistance in all your temptations.

ASPIRATION.

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy ! Our life, our sweetness, and our hope !



THIRTEENTH DAY.



MOST FAITHFUL VIRGIN,

Pray for us.

“ Be faithful unto death.”—Apoc. ii. 10.

We read in the gospel that when our Saviour was discoursing to the multitude, who listened with admiration to the divine wisdom that fell from his lips, a woman from the crowd addressed him, saying : “ Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the breasts that gave thee suck ; ”—to whom Jesus answered : “ Yea, rather. blessed are

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they who hear the word of God and keep it.”* The holy fathers find in this reply of Christ an eulogium on Mary; by which she is declared to be more blessed for having heard the word of God and kept it, than for having even conceived and brought forth the Saviour of the world. And in fact, the dignity of Mother of God would not have rendered her pleasing in His sight, if it were possible that it could be the privilege of a tepid or unfaithful creature. The virtues by which God prepared her for it, and by which He made her worthy of that high honour, were the effect of His grace with which she freely co-operated. But the dignity of being the Mother of God was a gratuitous favour,—a privilege, in which she had no other part than a submission to the Divine Will. Hence St. Augustin says: “The Virgin Mary is pronounced blessed, because she did the will of the Father. This it was that our Lord extolled in her.”

The fidelity of Mary in corresponding with all the graces she received from God, and with all his designs upon her, deserves both our attention and admiration, and is well calculated to give us a high idea of her super-eminent sanctity. “The foundations thereof are in the holy mountains,” that is, —according to the explanation which several of the holy fathers give of this text, which they apply to the Blessed Virgin,—“Mary’s sanctity commenced where the sanctity of other saints terminated;—their elevation was but the foundation on which the superstructure of that mysterious house which the divine ‘Wisdom built

* Luke, xi. 28.

for itself,' was raised." As Mary was always faithful in corresponding with the divine grace, who can conceive the altitude of that building which, as St. Gregory the Great says, reaches up to the throne of the divinity? Yes, Mary is greater, more exalted, and more worthy of our admiration, on account of this extraordinary fidelity to God's grace, than even by the title of Mother of God.

What an important lesson is afforded us in the fidelity of Mary! Little do we know what great designs God has on each one of us; little do we know the measure of grace he will impart to our souls, if we yield a ready compliance with his heavenly inspirations. How many souls wallow in the mire of human corruption, whom God designed to be models of heroism and zeal, but who, by being unfaithful to the grace of God, have become rocks of scandal, and have caused the ruin of innumerable souls! How many continue all their lives in tepidity and indifference; because they do not listen to the word of God, impelling them to the practice of perfect virtue; which is the sacrifice required from them, by that God who will not suffer any rapine in the holocaust? On the contrary, how many holy souls, imitating the fidelity of Mary, have fully corresponded with the designs of Heaven, and have attained that goal, which God has marked out as the point that they should reach, before being transferred from this probationary state of existence, to that never-ending happiness, where their fidelity is to be rewarded! Let us often direct our thoughts to our heavenly home, and behold, in spirit, the bright crown which rewards the fidelity of Mary, and of those, who, like her,

have been "faithful unto death." Let us endeavour to excite ourselves to renewed vigilance, and profit by all the means of advancing in virtue with which God may supply us. A faithful correspondence with all the graces we receive in the sacraments—in prayer—in reading good books—in public instructions—in edifying examples, will be the best means by which we can secure for ourselves perseverance unto the end; when, through Mary's intercession, we may hope to be faithful to the last decisive grace, which will terminate the series of his mercies to us. What a happiness will it then be to hear from the lips of Jesus Christ; the consoling invitation; "Well done thou good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over few things, I will place thee over many things: enter into the joy of the Lord."*

EXAMPLE.

St. Dominic was born in Old Castile in the year 1170, and was chosen by God to diffuse the light of the gospel throughout the world. He was particularly successful in opposing the errors of the Albigenses; who at that time afflicted the church by their impieties, while they desolated the south of France by their seditions. This great servant of God was untiring in his efforts to promote religion; and his preaching was confirmed by the sanctity of his life, and the multitude of miracles by which God attested the truth of the doctrine he announced. Devotion to Mary was,

* Matth. xxv. 21.

as he himself testifies, the principal weapon he made use of in this holy warfare with error. Before beginning to preach, he always knelt down, and invoked the assistance of Mary in these words: "Make me worthy, O Sacred Virgin, to announce thy praise, give me strength against thy enemies." Although the zeal of the holy man was not without fruit, as many were converted to the true faith, the result did not correspond with his expectations. Many sinners and heretics remained obstinate in their errors, and closed their ears to the words of truth. Dominic was afflicted at their obstinacy, but was comforted by a vision of the Blessed Virgin, in 1202, by which he learned, that as the angelical salutation was the means God employed to prepare her for the incarnation of his Son; so the devotion of the Rosary, in which that prayer is so frequently repeated, would be the best means of confirming men in its belief. This advice filled Dominic with the greatest consolation. Instead of wearying himself with long and tedious controversies, as had been his custom, he recommended the Rosary to the people in his public discourses; he expounded to them the various mysteries it commemorates; and taught them, both by word and example, in what manner they should perform this devotion. He soon saw that more souls were gained to God by this simple means, than by all his other exertions. It gave strength and unction to his discourses; it moved the hearts of the most obdurate sinners, and brought innumerable sectaries back to the church. With reason, then, is this prayer so strongly recommended to us. In order to promote its adoption among the faithful, the church

imparts many indulgences and other spiritual advantages to those who practise it with piety and exactness. If we have any care for our own salvation or the conversion of our brethren, we should have recourse to it ; and accompany the recital of the prayers with reflections on the mysteries of the life, death, and resurrection of our Saviour, which they are intended to commemorate. The faithful practice of this devotion will be an efficacious means of recommending us to the protection of the Holy Virgin ; who will obtain for us, as she did for Dominic, counsel in our doubts, and relief in our difficulties.

PRAYER.

O most prudent Virgin ! in all thy actions thou ever hadst the accomplishment of the divine will in view, and thy holiness was continually receiving additional lustre by the perfect fidelity with which thou didst correspond with divine grace. I, a poor, unfaithful servant of God, implore thy intercession in my behalf. The consciousness of my infidelities terrifies me ; especially when I consider how destitute I am of all real holiness, notwithstanding the special favours I have received from the divine bounty. Ah, faithful Virgin ! how can I hope to obtain pardon for the neglect with which hitherto I have abused God's grace, or expect to be hereafter the object of his favour, unless thou dost become my advocate for the past, and my security for the future. Yes, Holy Virgin ! thy fidelity shall be from this moment, the model which I will endeavour to imitate. I will no longer resist the Holy Ghost, by refusing

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to listen to the inspirations which He sends me, but will henceforward seek, not to do my own will, but the will of my heavenly Father. Offer this my resolution, O Holy Virgin, to thy divine Son, and obtain for me the grace necessary for faithfully observing it. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Resolve to let no day pass without saying, if possible, the third part of the Rosary. How little do we think of a quarter of an hour spent in idle conversation! If we were really devout to Mary, we would find time enough for this most salutary and most consoling devotion.

ASPIRATION.

Mother and Virgin, make me always mindful of thee!—S. Philip Neri.

 FOURTEENTH DAY.

MIRROR OF JUSTICE,

Pray for us.

“We see now through a glass.”—1 Cor. xiii. 12.

In creating the world, and still more in redeeming it, God proposed to himself His own greater glory in the manifestation of His divine

of justice, temperance, modesty of language and of manner, devotion and charity, which they have a right to expect from us, and on which, perhaps, their salvation may depend? What reproaches does conscience make us on this subject! Let us, then, for the present turn away our eyes from the sight of our own guilt or imperfection, and fix them on that bright Mirror of Justice which the church holds up to our veneration. Let us beg of her, that we may be imitators of her, as she has been of Christ; and let us ask her, with filial confidence, that we may be known in future as her children, by our faithful imitation of the virtues she has exemplified in her life.

EXAMPLE.

John Bessard was a native of the village of Stains, in the neighbourhood of St. Denis, near Paris. He was educated with great care by the parish priest, and was from his childhood a model of purity, and of exact attention to all his duties. As he advanced in age he advanced in virtue; and, in his thirtieth year, he formed an association of several of the villagers, whom he assembled on Sundays after divine service, that thus they might be preserved from the temptations of intemperance and dissipation. He read for them some pious book, or made some simple instruction, with the approbation of the parish priest.

He visited all the sick of the village; and during forty years, very few died in it without enjoying the benefit of his assistance in their last moments. This faithful servant of God knew that exterior practices of piety powerfully contribute

to the promotion of virtue : and he accordingly engaged most of his associates to enter the confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He selected this confraternity in preference to any other ; because he thought it best calculated to cause the infinite goodness of Jesus Christ to be remembered.

On the days specially set apart to honour the Sacred Heart of his Divine Master, Bessard, and a large number of his fellow villagers, approached the holy communion. He loved to dwell on the sentiment of St. Augustin ; " that the side of Jesus has been opened to procure us a passage to his heart, where we may learn how excessive was his love for men." He had received the name of John in baptism, and considered himself specially bound to regard the Holy Virgin as his Mother. He imitated her silence, her love of solitude, her prompt obedience, the purity of her heart, her profound humility, her attention to meditate on the words of Jesus Christ, and her affection for sufferings and humiliations.

He always spoke of Mary with the most profound respect. He proposed her as a model to young females, many of whom were induced by his exhortation, to secure their salvation by embracing the religious state. Those who remained in the world acknowledged that they were indebted for their perseverance in virtue and piety, to the habit he had made them contract, of regulating their conduct after the example of the Mother of God.

This faithful imitator of Mary died in the eighty-fourth year of his age, in 1752, at Paris, where

he was interred. His fellow villagers were inconsolable at not possessing the remains of their holy brother, whom for a long time they regarded as the tutelary angel of the place.

PRAYER.

O Mary, glorious mirror of justice! in whom God's perfections are more brightly reflected than in any other creature, I humble myself before thee, at the view of thy unexampled holiness, and I now resolve to take thee for the model of my conduct. I am penetrated with the most profound regret at the recollection of my past sins, which have made me, perhaps, an occasion of ruin to many, whom, by my good example, I ought to have attracted to virtue. When I reflect on all the opportunities of doing good, and advancing my own and my neighbour's salvation, which I have let pass without profit, I dread not only the account that I must give of the evil I have done, but also what I shall have to answer for the good I have neglected to do. O holy Virgin, be thou my advocate with thy divine Son, and make me show forth in all my actions the holiness of the God whom I serve, and my sense of the obligations imposed on me by the character of thy servant. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Examine how you have complied with the obligation incumbent on all, of giving good example. See especially whether you do not indulge in im-

perfections, which diminish the influence the general regularity of your conduct would otherwise command?

ASPIRATION.

Sweet heart of Mary, most closely united with the adorable heart of Jesus, compassionate our misery !

FIFTEENTH DAY.

SEAT OF WISDOM,

Pray for us.

“ *Wisdom hath built herself a house.*”—Prov. ix. 1.

Mary was the seat of wisdom, because the mother of the increated wisdom—“ the first born before all creatures.” As the praises of the Son are necessarily participated in by the mother, the church celebrates the dignity of Mary by repeating in the public service by which she honours her, the praises of her divine Son. The wisdom of God was manifested in the creation of the world, according to that of the psalmist—“ Thou hast done all things in wisdom.” In the 24th chapter of the book of Ecclesiasticus, the effects of this divine wisdom are described. “ I

came out of the mouth of the Most High, the first born before all creatures. I made that in the heavens there should rise light that never faileth, and as a cloud I covered all the earth. I dwelt in the highest place, and my throne is in a pillar of a cloud. In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue."* And yet this divine wisdom was not esteemed by men, when it dwelt among them. Jesus was clad in a fool's garment by the wisdom of this world! His doctrine is foolishness to those who are prudent in their own conceits: and who ever will walk in his footsteps must be content to be esteemed fools for his sake. Mary participated more in this wisdom than any other creature, because she approached nearer the source whence it emanated. If Jerusalem was the subject of the prophet's admiration on account of the peculiar presence of God in its holy temple, may we not apply his words to Mary—that living temple of God, in whom, in Jesus Christ, "the whole plenitude of the divinity dwelt corporally," and say: "Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God!"

Mary manifested in all her actions the fruits of the divine wisdom which had made her the tabernacle of God with men. "The fear of the Lord," says the Psalmist, "is the beginning of wisdom," and his holy fear was signally displayed in Mary. How great must have been this filial fear with which Mary watched over all her actions, and which preserved her from ever displeasing the divine wisdom. Was not her wisdom manifested in the

* Eccl. xxiv.

choice of so holy a spouse as Joseph ; who was at once the guardian of her innocence before God, and of her character before men ? Was not her wisdom displayed, by treasuring up in her heart whatever words were spoken of her divine son ? But why enumerate particular instances ? Did she not enjoy for thirty years the society of Him, of whom the evangelist remarks that he “ advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace, before God and men.”*

How happy was Mary in being the favoured creature, in whom was fulfilled what the Eternal Father said to the increated wisdom of His Son. “ Let thy dwelling be in Jacob, and thy inheritance in Israel, and take root in my elect !”† How still more happy in displaying this divine wisdom in her actions ? While we offer her the homage of our admiration, on this double title, let us reflect a little on ourselves. We, and all other creatures, are the work of God’s wisdom : every thing, both within and without us, is calculated to display his attributes. Do we ever advert to our obligation of seeing God in all things, and of rising from the contemplation of the creature to that of the great Creator ? The light of reason and revelation which we enjoy, are participations of the divine wisdom : do we esteem them as we ought ? Do we never undervalue, by our maxims and conversation, the wisdom which Christ teaches us in the gospel ? Alas ! how much is it to be feared, that, while we esteem so much worldly wisdom,—which confines its views to the limited prospect of this life, we pay but little attention to

* Luke, ii. 52.

† Eccl. xxiv. 13.

the dictates of that wisdom which is from above, and which alone can make us truly wise ! We should remember that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God ; and that the secrets of divine wisdom are imparted to the poor and humble, while they are hidden from the wise and prudent. Let us not, then, be wise in our own conceits, but carefully imitate the example of her whom the church calls the “ seat of wisdom.”

EXAMPLE.

Leander Vandrisse was born at Lille, on the 5th of November, 1808, of worthy parents ; at a suitable age he was apprenticed to a printer. Being naturally well disposed, he delighted in succouring the distressed. Having once saved up a little money to purchase for himself some articles of dress, he was proceeding to buy them, when he met with a poor creature, who appeared ready to expire from hunger. Leander gave him the money he had about him, and, quite pleased with the good action he had done, entered a church to pray. On this occasion, however, he acted more from natural sensibility, than from the higher motives supplied by religion.

About this time he was much addicted to the reading of romances and novels, of which he was passionately fond, and which filled his mind with many vain and dangerous thoughts. Happily he one day took up a good book,—“The History of Religion, by Lhomond.” He was delighted with the simple and interesting style of this writer ; and he soon felt disgusted at the light and frivolous works in which he formerly took pleasure.

“I am tired of novels,” said he to a friend, who, like him, was much devoted to that kind of reading; “I find within myself a frightful void. I must adopt a settled line of conduct, and be entirely virtuous: otherwise I fear I shall turn out badly. I must choose between an eternity of happiness and an eternity of misery. Eternity! Do you really feel the force of this awful word? Had you read the terrific description of hell I perused a few days ago! I cannot hide from myself that I must die, and that my life hangs on a thread!”

Shortly afterwards, Leander made a general confession, and, during the remainder of his life, gave the most edifying example of the virtues of his state. He formed a society of young artizans, who often met during the week-evenings, to recite the Rosary together. For some time Leander was threatened with consumption, which at length brought him to the grave. During his sickness, all his thoughts were turned to God, and to the Blessed Virgin, whom he regarded as the protectress of persons in their last agony. The only uneasiness he felt, arose from his ardent desire to see one of his friends converted to God. Immediately before death, he seemed to enjoy a foretaste of the joys of heaven. “What a happiness! What a happiness!” he would exclaim. “What have I ever done to deserve it. I owe it all to the holy Virgin.” In these sentiments he expired on the 21st of March, 1833.

PRAYER.

O Mary, thou art in truth the “Seat of Wisdom.” The Holy Ghost, the spirit of wisdom

who overshadowed thee, and the Son of God, the Eternal Wisdom of the Father, who dwelt in thy sacred womb, and rested on thy holy arms, imparted to thee all the gifts and treasures of supernatural wisdom. Behold me, a poor sinner, whose intellect is clouded by the mists of evil passions, and who so often mistakes evil for good, behold me now prostrate at thy feet,—imploping thee to obtain for me light to guide my steps in this dark world. Make me ever docile to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and teach me to esteem more the folly of the cross than all the wisdom of the world. Obtain for me a simple, guileless mind, and permit me not that while I profess to be a disciple of thy divine Son, the true and uncreated Wisdom of the Father, I should be found to be influenced by the false maxims of the world. Make me always recur to thee, O sacred Virgin, as the best advocate with God; and obtain pardon for my past perversity, in practically contemning the only true wisdom, and exposing myself to the danger of being eternally obliged to lament my folly. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Resolve to read a chapter each day in some pious author. The reading of a good book gave an Ignatius to the church!

ASPIRATION.

To thee do we raise our eyes, O holy Mother of God.

SIXTEENTH DAY.

CAUSE OF OUR JOY,

*Pray for us.**"Thou art the joy of Israel."*—Judith, xv. 10.

With what delight must the heart of that noble woman, Judith, have expanded, when Joachim, the high-priest, came from Jerusalem to Bethulia with all his ancients to see her, and said to her, in the name of the entire people : "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem ; thou art the joy of Israel ; thou art the honour of our people !" But how much more justly does the church apply these words to Mary, whom she thus addresses on the festival of her Nativity : "Thy Nativity, O holy Mother of God, brought universal joy to the world ; for from thee arose the Sun of Justice, Christ our Lord." Truly she is the "joy of the whole earth" in a much more perfect sense than Jerusalem was declared to be by the prophet. Had not God given us a Redeemer, how joyless would be our state ! To every child of Adam it is a vale of tears ; and those who seem to enjoy most of its happiness, know by experience that all earthly satisfaction is vain and transitory. Were it not for religion, and the ennobling and consoling hopes it holds out to our view, the world would be in reality, what some of the ancient philosophers imagined it to be, a place of punishment, where criminals were placed without any knowledge of the cause of their misfortune, or any means whereby it might be remedied.

Jesus Christ, who came not only to give glory to God, but peace on earth to men of good will, has entirely changed our situation. If we feel that we are guilty children of a guilty parent, we know that in Him we have a Redeemer, who has made abundant satisfaction for our offences, and by means of whom we can become reconciled with God. If we suffer from the rebellion of our own passions, we have, in His divine grace, the means whereby they may be subdued. Without this divine aid, we might be hurried into excesses which our reason and conscience would condemn, but would not control, and which would eventually lead us to regard life itself as an intolerable burden. If we have to endure tribulation, the thought of Jesus Christ and of his humiliations, privations, and sufferings, reconciles us to our lot, and even makes us glory in tribulation. If we naturally recoil from death,—from that departure out of life, which, in itself and its consequences, is so awfully important,—the hope of that future glory which the Son of Mary has purchased for us by His blood, more than suffices to calm our agitations, and make fear give way to hope. Truly, then, did Isaias describe the Messiah as the Prince of Peace. While we pour out our hearts in gratitude to Him, for this amelioration of our state, can we, or ought we, forget her, whom the church styles the Mother of the Prince of Peace, and the “cause of our joy?”

While we are sensible of this truth, and give thanks to God for this great benefit of spiritual peace and joy, of which Mary is the cause, through the merits of her divine Son, let us see

whether we participate in this good to the extent that we ought. Do we feel the joy of a good conscience? Have we that humble hope, that we have been washed from the defilement of sin in the blood of the Lamb, which the devout reception of the sacraments is calculated to produce? Perhaps we have rejected these means of salvation; perhaps we have abused them, by receiving them without the proper dispositions. Should this unfortunately be the case, how can we truly call Mary the cause of our joy, when, although she has given us the source of true happiness, we have not permitted its influence to reach our souls; but have preferred the gloom and agitation of a troubled conscience, to the joy and tranquillity which this Prince of Peace would have established in them. Let us take the resolution to find rest for our souls, by applying to them the healing balm of a Redeemer's mercy. By regularity of life, and exactness and fervour in God's service, we will secure for ourselves the joy of a good conscience; and thus we may hope to merit, through Jesus Christ, a participation in the joys of God's kingdom, which will never end.

EXAMPLE.

The Venerable Benedict Joseph Labre was born in the village of Annettes, near Boulogne-sur-mer, in France. He visited Italy, for the purpose of improving himself in the practice of virtue, and venerating the sacred shrines of the apostles. He made a pilgrimage to the Holy House at Loretto, in which the Mother of God dwelt while on earth; and the extraordinary graces he received there,

inspired him with a lasting affection for this venerated place, and made him repeat his visit no less than ten different times during the remaining years of his life. After this great sanctuary, that which he loved most, out of Rome, was the Church of "Our Lady of Hermits" in the diocese of Constance.

This holy man embraced a life of voluntary poverty, and seems to have been destined by Providence, to recal to men's minds the poverty of Christ. He eat nothing but the fragments which he received as a mendicant; and esteemed himself happy in suffering hunger, thirst, and all the inconveniences of travelling: for he had ever before his eyes the mortified life of the most Holy Virgin. He gloried in appearing clad with the livery of this amiable Mother, and always wore a chaplet (or beads) round his neck. It was difficult to see him pray before an image of Mary, and not feel deeply moved.

He was often found at a very early hour at the gate of the church of "Our Lady of the Mountains" at Rome, in which, during the eight years of his residence in that city, he daily spent many hours motionless on his knees, more like a seraph than a mortal man. In the beginning of 1783 he consecrated to the Mother of God all the moments of that year, which was to be his last. His strength daily diminished, but his fervour seemed to increase. On the Wednesday in Holy Week, he went to pray at the gate of his favourite church of "Our Lady of the Mountains." He suddenly felt an excessive languor come over him, and fainted on the steps of the church. He was brought into a house in the neighbourhood, whither

some zealous religious followed him to administer the last consolations of religion. They began to pray, and at these words: "Holy Mary, pray for him," this faithful servant of Mary calmly rendered up his soul to God, without any appearance of agony.

PRAYER.

O Mary! what sentiments shall I have at the hour of death? When I consider my sins, and think on that decisive moment, on which my eternal happiness or misery will depend, I am seized with fear and trembling. O sweet mother, in the blood of Jesus Christ, and in thy powerful intercession for its application to my soul, is all my hope. If, at present, I am tormented with remorse for my sins,—if I am uneasy when I consider the uncertainty of my having blotted them out by sincere penance, and am troubled at the danger of relapse; what will my sentiments then be! Unless thou wilt assist me, I shall be lost. Obtain for me, O Holy Virgin, during life, a sincere sorrow for my sins, and a persevering fidelity in the observance of God's commandments, that thus I may partake of the joy of a good conscience. Dispel the illusions with which the enemy of my soul will endeavour to betray me into eternal misery, at the hour of my death. May thy name, and the name of thy Divine Son be ever on my lips; and when my tongue refuses to articulate them, may my dying heart heave with emotions of heavenly love. Assist me, O Sacred Virgin, both now, and in the hour of my death. May my last words be, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and my last act, an act of love of God. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Resolve to approach the sacraments of penance and the holy eucharist, on all the festivals of the Blessed Virgin.

ASPIRATION.

O Mary, may my heart never cease to love thee, nor my tongue to praise thee!—St. Bonaventure.

 SEVENTEENTH DAY.

VESSEL OF HONOUR,—VESSEL OF SINGULAR
DEVOTION,

Pray for us.

"This is an admirable Vessel, the work of the Most High."—Eccl. xliii. 2.

This praise is given by the inspired writer to that glorious luminary, the sun, from which this world derives life and light, by which the fruits of the earth are matured, and the earth itself made to assume a variety of beautiful colours. We may apply to Mary the same words of praise, but in a much more elevated sense. She is that most pure vessel in which the second person of the blessed Trinity became incarnate, and who, in Mary,—that is the nature he assumed of Mary, is the son of justice which enlighteneth every man

that cometh into the world. His grace is so **necessary** for us, that unless it develope and **ma-**
ture the seeds of goodness implanted in our hearts,
we can never hope to bring forth fruit. He alone
is able to produce this effect; and without his
divine assistance, our efforts are vain, according
to that of the apostle: "I have planted, Appollo
watered, but God gave the increase."*

Mary is also styled a vessel of singular devotion,
on account of the faithfulness and fervour and
which she discharged her devotional exercise of
prayer and contemplation. If her divine Son spent
whole nights in prayer, we may be satisfied that
Mary did not cease to profit by an example which
so many motives induced her to imitate. In fact,
her whole life was principally occupied in this
sacred duty. While in the temple, in which she
remained from an early age, she profited by all
the opportunities she there had to commune with
God by prayer. What was her life after she had
conceived the Son of God, but a constant exercise
of this holy duty; for what is prayer but the union
of the soul with God; and surely Mary failed not
to profit by the extraordinary opportunities she
possessed of enjoying so high and holy a privilege.

While celebrating the perfect piety of Mary, we
should endeavour to profit by the example she has
given to us. The child naturally imitates the
mother. We are Mary's children: because she
is the mother of the first-born among many brethren,
and because Jesus Christ has commended us
to her in the person of St. John. "Woman, be-
hold thy son."† We are then bound to imitate

* 1 Cor. iii. 6.

† St. John, xix. 26.

her; and had we for her the affection of children, we would blush not to resemble her in our actions. What are then our feelings with regard to the holy duty of prayer? Perhaps we find it an irksome obligation, rather than a delightful duty. Under the influence of this feeling, have we not occasionally neglected it, or discharged it in a hurried and careless manner? Why do we not find in prayer the consolations which the saints experienced? We are astonished, when we read that that they spent whole days and nights in prayer. Ah! we have not yet learned to pray as the saints prayed; we have not learned to forget the world or ourselves when we appear before God; or to concentrate our thoughts on His divine perfections and inconceivable mercies. Hence we too often find in prayer that aridity and distraction which are the result of a distracted head and a divided heart. With the apostles, let us ask our Lord to teach us to pray; and employ the powerful intercession of Mary, to obtain for us this golden key, by which we may unlock the treasury of God's mercy.

EXAMPLE.

It is not easy to read without emotion the narrative of the last moments of a young person, who, during the short time she lived on earth, distinguished herself by extraordinary devotion to the Queen of Virgins, whose virtues she endeavoured to imitate. This innocent creature remained in an asylum, consecrated to the mother of God, till her eighteenth year. Very different from those of her age, she looked forward with trembling anxiety to the period which was to restore her to

her parents. She often cast herself at the feet of Mary, and besought her to procure for her a happy death, rather than permit her to be exposed to the dangers of the world, if her innocence would suffer by its contagious influence. So touching a prayer could not but be heard. The pious Amelia soon perceived that she was suffering from a malady which gradually undermined her constitution, and brought her, in a short time, to the verge of the grave. Tranquillity and resignation were the only sentiments she manifested. Filial love for her God had banished all terror. "I fear nothing," she exclaimed, in one of her devout aspirations to Mary, "I fear nothing: under the protection of so powerful an advocate, what have I to fear from my Saviour?"

The spirit of continual prayer was her only support in her extreme sufferings. "I suffer no pain," she would say, "when I converse with Jesus:—leave me with Jesus." Every word that escaped her lips was carefully noted, especially as her end drew nigh. She frequently exclaimed, in a firm voice: "Mary, show thyself to be a mother. During life thou hast ever been such to me. Do not abandon me in this decisive hour. Jesus, Mary, Joseph!" Taking from the hands of one of her companions a picture of the Blessed Virgin, she reverently kissed it, and placed it on her breast. She then asked for the image of her crucified Saviour, and approaching it to her pale lips, she said: "O My God, I adore thee," and expired.

PRAYER.

O most holy Virgin, thou art justly called a spiritual and honourable vessel; because the Lord

thy God enriched thee with the choicest gifts of the Holy Ghost. Thy thoughts were always great and noble ; thy feelings holy ; thy designs pure and sublime. Thou hadst no other ambition than to honour God, no other desire than to love Him, no other wish than to possess Him. The choicest gifts of nature, of grace, and glory, were imparted to thee without measure ; whereas, I am nothing else than a vessel of sin and misery. Most pure Mother ! have compassion on me ; reconcile me with thy Son ; commend me, and present me to Him, that, through thy intercession, I may be made partaker of His infinite merits, and never more seek any thing but what is divine and everlasting. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Resolve to dedicate, each morning, all the actions of the day to the greater honour and glory of God. Offer them through Mary to her Son.

ASPIRATION.

By thee we have access to thy Son, O Mother of our salvation. May He who was given to us by thee, receive us through thy intercession !—St. Bernard.

EIGHTEENTH DAY.

MYSTICAL ROSE,

Pray for us.

"I was exalted like a palm tree in Cades, and as a rose-plant in Jericho."—Eccl. xxiv. 18.

Among flowers there is none so beautiful as the rose, as among the daughters of Eve there was none so beautiful as Mary, who is called in the canticle "the most beautiful of women."* But although her external appearance was the image of the beauty of her soul, it could not fully represent it. "How beautiful art thou, my love," says Christ to her in the canticle of canticles, "how beautiful art thou,—thy eyes are dove's eyes, besides what is hid within."† Her external appearance was, indeed, invested with an air of sanctity, that inspired the beholder with the love of virtue, but her internal perfection was far superior; and the psalmist declares, that "all the beauty of the king's daughter"—Mary is the daughter of the Great King—"is from within."‡ It was this interior beauty of perfection that rendered her so lovely in the sight of God; it was the sweet perfume of her virtues that entitled her to the approbation of the heavenly King. "I gave a sweet smell," says she, "like cinnamon and aromatic balm. I yielded a sweet odour, like the best myrrh."§

* Cant. v. 9.

† Cant. iv. 1.

‡ Ps. xlv. 14.

§ Eccl. xxiv. 20.

As the beauty and fragrance of the rose are surrounded and protected by thorns, so was the virtue of Mary accompanied and perfected by the tribulations she endured. Hence in the canticles it is said: "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters."* "As the rose," remarks a holy writer, "grows among thorns, so the blessed Virgin grew up and was perfected in tribulation. And as in proportion as the rose matures, in the same degree the thorns increase; thus Mary, in proportion as she advanced in years, was tried in the ordeal of tribulations." How great were the trials to which God's providence exposed her! Who can conceive what she suffered from the uneasiness created in the mind of Joseph, by the divine mystery, which her humility prevented from disclosing to this most affectionate spouse? Her journey to Bethlehem, the trying circumstances under which she brought forth Jesus Christ, the flight into Egypt, and her residence in a strange country, where she had to suffer a thousand privations, in consequence of the poverty of her condition, were so many thorns by which God encompassed this mystical rose. On her return to Judea, how much must she have suffered, while passing through Jerusalem, from fear and anxiety lest the son of Herod should accomplish the impious design of his deceased father, and imbrue his hands in the blood of the infant Messiah! How much did this most affectionate of all Mothers have to suffer when the child Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, and she and her holy spouse sought him "sorrowing"

* Cant. ii. 2.

for three days? As the time approached in which Jesus was to commence his divine mission, and consummate the great work of our redemption, the most loving heart of Mary felt all a mother's solicitude, and all a mother's grief, at the foresight of what He was to endure. During the three years of His mission, every danger to which He was exposed,—every attempt made upon His life,—every obloquy cast on Him,—was keenly felt by this most tender parent. Truly, then, did her sorrows increase with the development of her own supereminent virtue: which, although it sustained her under them, did not render them less sensible or less afflicting. May we not then say to her with the spouse in the canticles: "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters?"

If we are attracted by the sweet fragrance of Mary's virtues, we are taught by her character, as Mystical Rose, that tribulations are the lot of the most favoured servants of God. There is only one way to heaven,—that in which Jesus Christ himself has walked, and in which we are to follow His footsteps. "Ought not Christ," says He himself, "to suffer these things, and so enter into his glory."* Mary, Joseph, the Apostles, in fine, all the servants of God, have passed through many tribulations, and thus entered into the kingdom of heaven. This seems almost a necessary part of God's providence. Were earth the place of our permanent abode, we might be naturally surprised and afflicted at finding ourselves exposed to suffering; but as heaven is our home, we cannot

* Luke, xxiv. 26.

hope for perfect rest or satisfaction, as long as we are strangers and foreigners in a distant country. Every trial that we experience is an act of God's mercy, by which He endeavours to detach us from earth and its frivolities, and direct our thoughts to that place, where alone there is unalloyed joy. Why, then, do we wonder at this providence of God? Why do we repine when we experience it, and, not unfrequently, make these means of purifying our affections, and approaching closer to God, so many occasions on which we manifest the unworthy sentiments of our hearts, and cause God to retire still farther from us? Ah, let us think on Mary, and remember that as her virtue is likened in the Scripture to myrrh, whose scent is sweet, but whose taste is bitter; so our humble imitation of her, while it diffuses around us the "good odour of Christ," will make us partake of the bitterness of His chalice.

EXAMPLE.

What better example can be proposed to the devout admirer of the Mystical Rose, than that of St. Stanislas Kostka, who may be justly styled "the flower of holy youth." This most faithful servant of Mary, after enduring much from the violence of an elder brother, contrived to elude his unjust vigilance, and entered the Society of Jesus. He died in the odour of consummate sanctity while yet a novice. On the first of August, the month in which he died, he heard a sermon, in which the novices were exhorted to spend each day as if it were to be the last of their lives. After the discourse was over, Stanislas told his

companions that he recognised in this advice the voice of God, admonishing him that his death would take place in the course of the month—whether it was that God had vouchsafed to make him an express revelation to that effect, or that He had given him a strong presentiment of what was to happen. His companions, seeing the perfect health of the young prophet, laughed at what he said, and only regarded it as the expression of his desires. Four days afterwards Stanislas accompanied Father Emmanuel to the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, and, on the way, spoke of the approaching festival of the Assumption. “Father,” said the holy youth, “how beautiful will Paradise be on that day! On that day the Mother of God is crowned Queen of heaven, and elevated above the choirs of angels! Ah, if it be true, that each year this festival is renewed in the heavenly Jerusalem, I have great confidence, O good Mother! that I shall soon behold it!” The manner in which he expressed these last words astonished his companion.

That very evening he felt the first attack of a fever, which, although slight, was regarded by him as a sure indication of his approaching end. On retiring to rest, he said with a transport of inexpressible joy, “I shall never more rise from this bed, what a happiness! Death is a real blessing. Ah, my good Mother, thou hast obtained for thy unworthy child the grace of being with thee on the festival of thy triumph!” On the vigil of the Assumption, the malady appeared still inconsiderable, and did not present any alarming symptom; but the saint told a lay brother that he would die on the following night. Shortly

NINETEENTH DAY.

TOWER OF DAVID,

Pray for us.

“Thy neck is as the tower of David, which is built with bulwarks.”—Cant. iv. 4.

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower,” says the inspired author of the book of Proverbs. We are here on earth, as in a field of battle : our enemies are numerous and strong. Besides our own passions, we have to contend with “the spirits of wickedness in high places ;”^{*} that is, with Lucifer and the companions of his fall, who seek to involve us in their guilt and its punishment. When we consider how much superior to us in intelligence and power are these unhappy spirits, who once held the highest places in heaven, and how much they envy us who are destined to occupy the thrones of glory, which they lost by disobedience ; we may easily conceive how incessant and powerful are their efforts to ruin us. Were we to depend on ourselves, we could not stand for a moment before them ; we should be the easy prey of their power, and the sport of their malignant intelligence. But we have the authority of God’s word for declaring, that “whoever shall invoke the name of the Lord, shall be saved.”[†] It is then by distrusting our own weakness, and

^{*} Eph. vi., 12.

[†] Rom. x. 13.

by flying to the strong tower, which is God's name, that we shall baffle the wiles, and triumph over the assaults, of our spiritual enemies.

Mary is called the "Tower of David," because as Mother of the Redeemer, the son of David, she is to men a tower of refuge from the face of the enemy. If the invocation of the sacred name of Jesus be sufficient to put our enemies to flight, we ought to remember that we cannot pronounce this saving name, in a manner pleasing to God, unless assisted by his grace. We ought, then, to dread our own unworthiness; and seek to secure for ourselves the saving influence of this holy name, by the intercession of her, whose "neck is as the tower of David, which is built with bulwarks:—a thousand bucklers hang from it, all the armour of valiant men." The enemy of our souls flies at the mention of her name; because she has crushed his head, and because he despairs of wounding any one whom she defends, by opposing her buckler to his fiery darts. Hence she is called by a writer, not liable to the suspicion of exaggerated piety: "the terror of hell, the hope of Christians, and our sure protection."* Hence St. Bonaventure, addressing her, says: "Thou art our sure protection, O most Sacred Virgin. Under the wings of thy clemency do we flee: save and protect us." The intercession of Mary will obtain for us strength to resist every evil suggestion, every foul temptation, however violent it may be. Aided by such a powerful protectress, although we should walk in the midst of the valley of death—that is, although we should find our-

* Erasmus, *Orat. ad Virginem*.

selves every instant exposed to danger, and see around us the bodies of our fallen brethren—we shall fear no evil, because she will be with us. To her, after God, we will gratefully ascribe the triumph we shall have gained over our enemies, and say to her: “Thou hast been a tower of strength against the face of the enemy.”*

Although the consideration of the enemies with whom we have to contend—their number, their power, and superior skill—are calculated to fill us with distrust in the result of the contest, we have protection in Mary. Courage, then, must animate us; and instead of fearing, we should ever despise the stratagems, and repel the open attacks, of our enemies. But this courage, without which no man can hope to conquer, must be regulated by prudence. Mary will protect us, in all the dangers which befall us in the order of Providence; but she will not protect us, if we expose ourselves to the danger we ought to shun, and act rather from the impulse of self-confidence, than from the dictates of duty. God himself is not pledged to protect us in such circumstances; it is our weakness, and not our presumption, that he has promised to assist. Mary, then, will not be a “Tower of David” to us, if we rashly expose ourselves to danger, by reading bad or dangerous books, by frequenting the society of those whose bad example is likely to corrupt our morals, or by unnecessary intimacy with others, whose principles may pervert us, or whose tepidity may chill the ardour of our zeal for the service of God. If we have frequently received wounds from our

* P's. lx. 4.

spiritual enemies, it is because we neglected to shield ourselves with the protection of Mary, or because we acted on the erroneous idea, that that protection would be unconditionally afforded to us. Salutary regret for the past must be united with cautious vigilance for the future; that thus we may prove ourselves good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and having "fought the good fight and kept the faith," we may be entitled to receive from him the unfading crown of glory, which he has promised to bestow on those who have overcome.

EXAMPLE.

We can have no better illustration of the protecting powers of Mary than that afforded by St. Ignatius of Loyola, who, from being a soldier of the world, became a valiant champion of Christian faith and piety. This saint, whom Providence raised up in most dangerous times, to be the founder of the Society of Jesus, and, thereby, the instrument of so much good in the church, ascribed his conversion, and the other graces he received from God, to the intercession of Mary. While recovering from the effects of a wound he had received at Pampeluna, which he had bravely defended, he conceived the design of dedicating himself to God, being moved thereunto by the reading of the lives of Christ and the saints. He offered himself first to Mary, and most earnestly besought her to present and recommend him to her divine Son. As he was one night kneeling before her image, and, with tears, imploring her to be his protectress, the holy Virgin with her

divine Son appeared to him ; and this vision produced the most extraordinary change in his interior. His heart was entirely changed, and he, who had hitherto suffered much from impure thoughts, found himself ever afterwards delivered from them. A man of so noble a character as Ignatius could not be content with an imperfect conversion, and he resolved to dedicate himself entirely to God's service. As soon as his wound was healed, he left his father's house with the view of abandoning the world. He went to Montserrat, where there was a celebrated image of Mary, much venerated by all Spain. As he journeyed along, he thought he could not do any thing more likely to render himself worthy to appear before the Mother of God, than to make a vow of perfect continence. When he arrived at the church, he made a general confession, which occupied him three days, and which he was frequently forced to interrupt by the excess of his grief for having offended God. After the manner of the old knights, he hung up his sword at the altar of the Blessed Virgin, to signify, that in future he would only serve her divine Son ; and remained the whole night in the church, watching and praying. When he meditated the establishment of his new Society, he chose one of the principal festivals of Mary to commence the good work. He and his companions made their vows on the festival of her Assumption, in the chapel of Our Lady at Montmartre, near Paris, and annually renewed them on the same day. He constantly carried about with him a picture of the Mother of God ; and in all difficulties and undertakings had recourse to her intercession. He was

careful to inspire all his disciples with a tender devotion to this Virgin Mother, that thus they might be assisted by her protection in all their difficult undertakings. One day, as Father Araoz, his relative, on taking leave of him, manifested great regret at the separation; Ignatius, to console him, presented him with an image of the Holy Virgin, which he had borne round his neck, and assured him, that in all dangers of soul and body, he had constantly experienced the protection of Mary.

PRAYER.

O Mary, Tower of David! be thou my protectress in the fierce struggle with the enemies of my soul. I have been for a long time a miserable slave of Satan; but now I renounce him, and dedicate myself to thy service, to honour and serve thee all the days of my life. Accept of me, and do not reject me, as I merit. O Mother of mercy, in thee do I place full confidence; through thee do I hope to obtain all grace. I bless and return thanks to God for having inspired me with these feelings towards thee, which I regard as a pledge of my salvation. Alas! hitherto I have been conquered, because I did not recur to thee. Now I hope by the merits of Jesus Christ, and through thy intercession, to obtain pardon for my past weakness, and courage and strength to contend, even to the last, for the prize of eternal life. But I may unfortunately relapse. My enemies are not destroyed. How many new temptations have I yet to overcome! Ah, most powerful Virgin, protect me, and suffer me not to

be ever again vanquished. I know that with thy assistance I shall conquer ; but I fear lest I should neglect to invoke it. Ah, dear Mother, obtain for me then this grace, that I may always invoke thee in the hour of peril ; and that my heart and tongue may say : “ Mary, shew thyself a mother, and suffer me not to lose my God by sin ! Amen.”

PRACTICE.

Resolve carefully to avoid all occasions of sin. The man who presumes, will certainly fall. It is better to fly a thousand times, than be once overcome.

ASPIRATION.

Be to us, O Mary, a tower of strength against the face of the enemy !

 TWENTIETH DAY.

TOWER OF IVORY, HOUSE OF GOLD,

Pray for us.

“ Solomon made a great throne of ivory, and covered it with the most pure gold.”—3 Kings, x. 18.

Solomon was a glorious type of Christ. He was a prince of peace, as his name imports ; and,

as such, represented Christ, who was, emphatically, the prince of peace, because he came not to give peace to one nation, but to impart it to all men. This peace is not so much an immunity from external aggression, as that internal "peace of God which surpasses all understanding,"—an enduring peace which no external violence can disturb, as long as the soul is willing to retain it. The temple which Solomon built, and which, by its magnificence and grandeur, rendered Jerusalem the "joy of the whole earth," was an expressive figure of that church which Jesus Christ established. This is truly the "joy of the whole earth," by its universal diffusion, by being enriched with all the treasures of grace and sanctity; and, unlike the figure, is destined to survive all the efforts of the enemies of God's people. The throne on which Solomon sat had special reference to Christ, who inherited the throne of David his father through Mary, whose virtues are not inaptly signified by the pure ivory of which it was made, and the most pure gold with which it was overlaid.

The church applies to the Blessed Virgin the words of the Cantic of Canticles, "Thy neck is as a tower of ivory;"—which is thus explained by St. Bernardine of Sienna: "Vivifying graces are conveyed from Christ, the head, through the Virgin, to the other members of his mystical body." St. Paul expressly declares that we are all members of a mystical body, of which the head is Christ. As among the members of this mystical body, the Blessed Virgin is, after Christ, the most exalted, so she is well compared to the "tower of ivory," to which the neck of the spouse in the Canticles is likened; especially as it is through her, accord-

ing to the opinion of many holy doctors, that God has decreed to convey to the members of this mystical body, the graces which are necessarily derived from Christ, who is the head. The holy Abbot Rupert says of Mary: "As a tower of ivory, she is beloved by God, and terrible to the demon." On account of her spotless purity, which the shadow of imperfection never sullied, and which is well represented by the whiteness of ivory, she pleases God. On the same account, as also because she is the channel of God's grace to men, she is terrible to the devil, the ancient serpent; whose poisonous bite she never experienced, and whose head she not only crushed by bringing forth the Redeemer, but whom she continues to overcome by her wonderful influence in the application of the Redeemer's merits to the souls of men.

The ivory throne of Solomon was overlaid with most pure gold. Gold is taken by the holy fathers as the symbol of charity; for as gold is the most precious of the metals, so charity is the most precious of the virtues; and as gold is distinguished from the other metals by its peculiar brightness, so charity shines out conspicuous as the queen of virtues. Adopting, then, the mystical interpretation of the text, Mary resembled the throne of Solomon, not only by her immaculate purity, represented by the ivory, but also in consequence of her supereminent charity, represented by the glittering gold. As charity is the love of God, and as God is loved in proportion as He manifests Himself to creatures and imparts to them His grace, we can form no conception of Mary's perfection in this regard that will not fall far short of the reality. "Mary," says Albert the Great,

“ was a golden temple of charity.” St. Thomas of Aquin, one of the most exact and profound divines that ever wrote, says that “ as there was nothing in the temple that was not covered with gold, so there was nothing in Mary that was not replete with sanctity.” Mary, then, was that mystical house, which “ widom built for itself,” and which, as it was a house prepared not for man but for God, was adorned with all the perfection of charity, and thus rendered a suitable abode for Him “ who is Charity” * itself. Mary, as the “ Tower of Ivory,” teaches us that we should avoid every imperfection, and much more every sin, and exhibits to us the wonderful power which God has given to the greatest weakness, because united with the most perfect innocence. As the “ House of Gold,” she inculcates to us the necessity of charity, without which we cannot hope that our souls can become the throne of God, or that we ourselves shall be admitted into the temple of His glory, where immunity from defilement will not entitle us to enter, unless our hearts be overlaid with the gold of charity. Our hearts must glow with this divine virtue, if we hope to take our place with Mary and all the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem, who see God because they love, and in seeing Him are blessed.

EXAMPLE.

St. Philip of Neri was one of the greatest ornaments of the church in the sixteenth century ; and by his wonderful zeal for the promotion of

* St. John, iv. 16.

God's glory in the city of Rome, procured for himself the title of the apostle of that holy city. His youth was distinguished by innocence and piety; and as he advanced in years, his piety increased. Among his other virtues his devotion to the Mother of God was particularly remarkable : his love for Mary was so great, that he had her name almost always in his mouth, and incessantly laboured to promote her honour among men. No child had ever so tender an affection for his mother as Philip had for Mary, whom he called 'his love,' his 'joy,' his 'consolation.' He spoke these words with so much feeling and unction, that those who heard him were usually much affected, and not unfrequently were moved to tears. He spent whole nights in prayer ; and in his addresses to the Holy Virgin, he spoke with as much confidence and fervour as if she were actually present. He often was favoured with supernatural visions of this celestial queen ; one of which, which occurred when he was advanced in years, is particularly remarkable. He lay dangerously sick, and his physicians had little hopes of his recovery. He was heard to cry out on a sudden, " O most holy Mother ! O most amiable Mother ! O most beautiful Mother ! O most blessed Mother !" The physicans and some clergymen ran to him, and found him elevated somewhat from the bed in which he lay, and heard him say, " O my dearest Queen, I am not worthy, —I do not deserve that thou shouldst come to visit and to heal me. What shall I do for thee, if thou healest me, for I have never done any thing good." Amazed at what they saw and heard, some wept for joy ; others trembled with fear. The physician asked him what he wished for ; to whom

he replied : “ Have you not seen the holy Virgin, who has come to take away my ailments ?” While he spoke thus he came to himself, and as he perceived that the room was full of people, he covered his head through shame, and began to weep. The physicians fearing that this might injure him begged him to desist, and asked to feel his pulse : “ I do not require your assistance any longer,” replied the saint ; “ the most holy Virgin has been here, and has restored me.” They found him, in fact, perfectly restored ; and, on the following morning, he rose, as usual, and applied himself to his accustomed occupations, without suffering any inconvenience. The holy man said always to those who visited him : “ Believe me, there is no more powerful means to obtain God’s grace, than to employ the intercessions of the holy Virgin. Say to her often : ‘ Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray to thy dear Jesus for me.’”

On another occasion, this great saint experienced the efficacy of Mary’s intercession in a very extraordinary manner. His new church was being built. Philip sent in great hurry one day for the architect, and ordered him to take off the roof from an old building, which would have fallen in the preceding night, had not the Blessed Virgin sustained it. And, in fact, when the workmen came, and examined the building, they found that the beams which sustained the roof had fallen out of their places, and that the whole remained suspended in the air, without any visible support. The saint felt peculiar pleasure in visiting the church of St. Maria Maggiore, and he recommended nothing more frequently to his disciples, than love and devotion to the holy Vir-

gin. He procured for many persons extraordinary favours through Mary, by causing them to recite the prayer, "Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray to thy Jesus for me." Sometimes he added: "Pray to thy Son Jesus for me a sinner." Often he repeated these words, "Virgin and Mother," and said that they expressed all the greatness and dignity of Mary, and had a great efficacy in obtaining God's graces. Had we such a tender, confiding love for Mary, as that with which this great saint was animated, how many graces would we receive through her hands, to whom the church applies the words: "In me is all the grace of the way and of the truth; in me is all hope of life and of virtue?"*

PRAYER.

O Mary! I acknowledge thee to be the most noble, the most sublime, the most pure, the most beautiful, the most holy, and the most amiable of all creatures. Ah! would that all mortals knew thee, and loved thee, as thou dost deserve: but I am consoled when I reflect on the great number of holy souls who serve and love thee on earth, and are enamoured with thy goodness and surpassing beauty in heaven. Above all, I rejoice, and congratulate with thee, that God loves thee above all men and angels united. O most amiable mother, I, although a miserable sinner, presume to love thee: but alas, my love is too faint; I would wish to love thee more tenderly, and this is the favour I have to ask of thee. To love thee,

* Eccl. xxiv. 25.

is a great means of loving God ; since thou dost not fail to procure for those who love and serve thee, that great grace of loving their Creator with their whole heart here below, that thus they may be worthy to see, love, and enjoy Him in heaven. O Mary, obtain for me a heart inflamed with the love of God : and take from me this hardened heart, which has hitherto resisted all the attractions of His love. Thou art the mother of holy love ; be thou now my advocate with God, that “ neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Amen.

PRACTICE.

Recite the acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity, to-day, in honour of Mary, and make this one of the devotions which you will resolve to practise in her honour.

ASPIRATION.

O Mary, by the love thou didst bear to Jesus Christ, help me to love him.—S. Brigid.

* Rom. viii. 38, 39.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.

ARK OF THE COVENANT,

Pray for us.

“ Josue rent his garments and fell flat on the ground before the ark of the Lord.”—Jos. vii. 6.

When the children of Israel were journeying through the desert, after having been delivered from the bondage of Egypt, God commanded them, among other things, to make an ark. This was to be the visible emblem of His presence among them; and from the propitiatory, or lid which was suspended over the ark, without however closing it up, He gave answers to Moses.* The ark was made of setim wood, and overlaid both in the inside and outside with most pure gold. This ark was the most holy thing among the Jews. It was placed in the tabernacle, within the sanctuary or “ holy of holies :”—it was concealed by a veil, not only from the sight of the people, but also from the priests, according to the commandment of God; and it was only on the solemn day of “ expiation,” that the high priest was allowed to enter the sanctuary in which it was placed. When the tabernacle was set up, and consecrated, the glory of the Lord filled it,† so that not even Moses could enter into it. A

* Exod. xxv. 22.

† Exod. xl. 32.

cloud hung over the tabernacle by day, and a fire by night. When it removed from the tabernacle, the children of Israel went forward; if it hung over the tabernacle, they remained in the same place.* The ark contained a vessel filled with the manna, by which the children of Israel were miraculously fed for forty years in the desert. "When the ark was lifted up, Moses said: Arise, O Lord, and let thy enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee from before thy face."†

A pious and learned interpreter of the Holy Scriptures‡ says: "The ark containing the manna, that is, Christ, is the Blessed Virgin, who causes us to overcome both men and demons." Mary is then called the "ark of the covenant," because she was the tabernacle of God with men; for not only the glory of the Lord filled her, but the Lord of glory himself assumed human nature of her, and abode for nine months in her sacred womb. If, then, the Jews were commanded to reverence the ark;—and if God manifested, by so many extraordinary wonders, how jealous He was of the honour of this symbol of His presence with His people, how much more are all Christians bound to honour and reverence her—whose relation to the Deity is infinitely more intimate than was that which the Jewish ark of the covenant bore to him. Shall not we then reverence Mary, as Josue revered the ark, when he fell down before it.§ In either case, the Majesty of God is the ultimate object of our veneration. If we pay peculiar homage to Mary, this mystical ark of

* Exod. ix. 32, 36.

† Numb. x. 35.

‡ Cornelius à Lapide.

§ Jos. vii. 6.

the better covenant, it is because God Himself has honoured her; and because He is infinitely more jealous of the honour due to her, whom he made the mother of his consubstantial son, than he was of the honour paid to the ancient ark, which was only a mere symbol of His presence. If of every faithful soul, he says, "he who touches thee, touches the apple of my eye," how much more severely will he punish any positive irreverence, or want of becoming respect towards her, who, alone of all creatures, bears to Him the endearing and influential relation of Mother. The Bethsemites were struck dead for irreverently looking at the ark, and Oza, for stretching out his hand to sustain it; through a momentary forgetfulness of the power of Him who filled it. How much more reason have those to fear the death of their souls, who treat with indifference, and sometimes with positive disrespect, the Holy Mother of God! Ah! we may be assured, that were it not for the powerful intercession of this most patient Mother, who has learned from her Divine Son to pray for those who persecute her, God would visit with exemplary severity the awful temerity, which trifles with what He has made most holy and venerable.

Mary is the "ark of the covenant," because, like that glorious type, she is our protection and our defence. When the ark passed over the Jordan, the waters were dried up.* Can we oppose to the torrent of human custom, which, as St. Augustin says, hurries down the unhappy children of Adam to the infernal abyss, any thing more

* Jos. ch. iii.

powerful than the intercession of Mary? After the ark was borne round the walls of Jericho in solemn procession for seven days, these strong bulwarks, by which the enemies of God's people hoped to turn away the chastisement God was about to inflict on them, fell to the ground. We may be assured, that however formidable may be the difficulties we have to surmount in the attainment of any object connected with the promotion of God's glory, we shall overcome them, by bearing about with us this mystic ark—by looking for assistance to Mary. We read in the scripture, that as long as the ark remained in the house of Obededom, God blessed him and his household.* Let us bring Mary into our hearts, by banishing from them whatever may displease her Divine Son, and cherishing a tender devotion towards her; by making her, after God, the principal object of our affections; and we shall find by experience, that the faithful servant of this holy Virgin will be enabled to say, both in time and in eternity: "All good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands."†

EXAMPLE.

If devotion to the Mother of God is suitable and profitable for all conditions and relations of life, it is especially so for youth, whom it inspires with the greatest aversion to vice; and while it holds up before them the model of every virtue, procures for them the protection and assistance of

* 2 Kings, vii. 2.

† Wisdom, vii. 2.

this good and powerful Virgin Mother. Among many who have experienced this, St. Francis Regis is particularly conspicuous. He was born in 1597, in the diocese of Narbonne in France. From his earliest childhood he had been taught to entertain a tender devotion to the Mother of God. To sustain and exercise this feeling of piety, as also to enjoy its benefits on a more extensive scale, he eagerly sought to be admitted into a confraternity, which had for a special object to honour Mary. As soon as he attained this wish, he believed himself bound to aspire after greater perfection. No one showed a more determined resolution to regulate his life by the rules of the confraternity than the youthful Francis. He increased his prayers and devotional exercises; he approached the sacraments more frequently; and he redoubled his exertions to attain perfection in all his words and actions, in order to merit the approbation of God and of his Holy Mother. When he afterwards entered into the Society of Jesus, his devotion to Mary received a new impulse. When in school he profited by every opportunity, by means of exhortation, instruction and prayer, to communicate to others the love of Mary, with which his own heart was inflamed. It was, however, in the missions to which he heroically devoted himself, and in which he spent the last ten years of his life, that he manifested in a special manner his devotion to the Mother of God, and imparted his own feelings to the faithful who heard his instructions. He placed all his apostolic undertakings under the powerful protection of Mary; he ever had her name in his mouth; and was always zealous for the promotion of her

honour. In all dangers or distress, he fled to her for assistance and relief. He recommended himself to her patronage in all his instructions and exhortations. His indefatigable zeal to gain souls for Jesus, and his fidelity and love for Mary, merited for him to behold the Mother and the Son at his last hour, who came to assist him in his final combat, and conduct his soul to the happiness of heaven. Enraptured at the sight, Francis cried out to his companion with exultation : " I see Jesus and Mary, who come to meet me, and bring me to heaven ; ah, brother, what a happiness ; how contented I die !" Saying this, he expired.—What a happiness, indeed, to have Jesus and Mary assist us in our last moments ! but this favour will only be granted to those who during life have served them faithfully.

PRAYER.

O holy Virgin, thou hast more claims on our veneration than even the ark of the covenant had on that of the Jewish people. In thy virginal womb was conceived the true manna of our souls, Jesus Christ, in thee was the covenant of God's mercy to man consummated. Full of holy awe at thy inconceivable dignity, I cast myself before thee, and implore thee, that as God formerly spoke from the ark, so he would now speak peace to my soul through thee. Obtain for me pardon for the innumerable violations of His covenant, of which I have been guilty, and the grace to be, henceforward, a faithful observer of all its holy obligations. And as the leaders of God's people were accustomed to consult the ark, in all their

difficulties, and followed the mysterious cloud which hung over it; so do I resolve to fly to thee in all my doubts and dangers: be thou to me a light to guide my steps, and conduct me to the true land of promise, the Paradise of my God; where with thee I may praise Him for an endless eternity. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Excite within you a great reverence for Mary, and avoid every thing that would indicate a want of due respect. Always remember that although Mary be a creature, she is infinitely superior to all other creatures. They are the servants of God: **SHE IS HIS MOTHER.**

ASPIRATION.

Hail, Daughter of God the Father! Hail, Mother of God the Son! Hail, spouse of the Holy Ghost! Hail, Temple of the Most Holy Trinity!
—Simon Garcia.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY.

GATE OF HEAVEN,*Pray for us.*

“This is the gate of the Lord; the just shall enter into it.”—Psalm cxvii. 20.

Mary is the “Gate of heaven,” because by her God descended to man; and because by her man ascends to God. The Eastern gate spoken of by Ezechiel,* and through which the Lord the God of Israel passed, is understood by St. Jerome to have prefigured the Blessed Virgin, through whom the Son of God entered into this world by being made flesh in her sacred womb. “This,” says this great doctor of the church, “is that Eastern gate through which the Sun of justice, and our High Priest, according to the order of Melchisedeck, enters and comes out.” By her it was that God appeared among men, and was found in appearance like to man. Such was the reverence paid to the gate of the temple through which the Lord God of Israel entered, — that is, through which the ark, which was a symbol of Him, was brought into the temple, that it ever after remained closed; lest any one should pass through it, and render the way which God had sanctified common, as every other way through which men pass. With how much more reverence should we

* Ezech. xliv. 1.

look up to Mary, through whom Jesus Christ came into this world ! The church applies these words of the 86th psalm to the Blessed Virgin : " The Lord loves the gates of Sion above all the tabernacles of Jacob." Ah ! let us reverence and love Mary above all other creatures, how high and holy they may be ; and let us be convinced, that we shall always be inadequate to express our obligations to her, for the great benefit we have received through her from God.

Mary is called the " Gate of heaven," because by her man ascends to God. In giving us Jesus Christ, whose name is the only one " under heaven, given to men whereby we may be saved,"* she has supplied us with the mystic ladder on which we may ascend to heaven. She is also the " Gate of heaven," because she is most powerful in obtaining for sinners repentance, and perseverance for the just. At the close of life, when we are as it were on the threshold of eternity, " then," says St. Jerome, " Mary not only comes to us when called, but even spontaneously advances to meet us."† The church evidently considers her to be the gate of heaven, or as some holy writers express it, the dispensatrix of God's graces, on account of her extensive influence in their distribution. Hence in all her solemn appeals to God, as well in the tremendous mysteries, in which she offers up the mystic lamb that was slain from the beginning of the world, as in the praises which, like David, she gives seven times each day to God—the church never omits to accompany her own prayers by an appeal to Mary,

* Acts, iv. 12.

† Hieron. ep. 2, ad Eustoch.

for her intercession. After the divine prayer composed by Christ himself, there is no form of supplication which she recommends more earnestly, or which is more universally practised, than the angelical salutation. In it her children knock daily at this gate of heaven, that through it they may receive all graces during life, and at the hour of death, may enter by it into paradise, "By thee," says St. Augustin, "do the wretched obtain mercy — the ungrateful, grace — sinners, pardon—the weak, great things—the earthly, heavenly goods—mortals, life — and pilgrims, their country."

We should accompany our reflections on Mary's privilege of being the "Gate of heaven," through which the just shall enter, by an examination of ourselves. Are we deserving of the character of "just," which can alone entitle us to pass through this heavenly gate? Like the foolish virgins mentioned in the gospel, have we not let the lamp of our justice, which should have shined before men, grow dim, or perhaps become entirely extinguished, by our neglect to supply it with the oil of good works? It is true, that if at our last hour we apply to this most prudent Virgin, she will not refuse, lest by sharing with us she should expose herself to the danger dreaded by the prudent virgins mentioned in the gospel. "For," says Hugh of St. Victor, "she bears in the person of her son, an overflowing and exhaustless vessel, from whose oil the lamps of all may be lit." Still we should fear, lest, even Mary should not then interpose her prayers for us, if, during life, we have habitually neglected to profit by them. We know that God himself, in punishment

of our refusal to accept his invitation to repentance, has declared that those who treat Him thus unworthily shall call on Him, in their distress, and that He will not hear them. Mary, then, who is ever submissive to the orders of His providence, may turn away from us her maternal eyes; or, what is more likely, the recollection of our past ingratitude, and the suggestions of the enemy of our souls, will deprive us of all hope of obtaining her intercession, and prevent us from pronouncing that sweet name, which would obtain for us the grace of repentance. Confidence in the efficacy of her intercession should inspire us with hope when we repent; it would be presumption to make it the occasion of our continuing in guilt.

EXAMPLE.

St. Charles Borromeo had the most lively and tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Besides reciting daily on his knees, the rosary and office of this glorious Queen, he fasted on bread and water on the Vigils of her feasts. If he happened to be in the street, when the bell tolled for the "Angelus," he never failed to kneel down, even in unfavourable weather. He had in his cathedral a chapel and confraternity of the rosary; and established a solemn procession on the first Sunday of each month, in honour of the Mother of God. He placed all his institutions under Her protection, and established the custom in his diocese of honouring the name of Mary, whenever it was heard. He caused her image to be placed at the entrance of all parish churches under his jurisdic-

tion ; to admonish the people that if they would enter into heaven, they should implore her intercession, whom the church styles the " Gate of Heaven."

PRAYER.

O most Holy Virgin ! Eve had closed on us the gates of heaven by her disobedience ; by thy obedience thou hast opened them to us. By thee did the Son of God come down from heaven : by thee has the light of this true Sun of justice arisen on man. Through thee do our prayers ascend to God ; and by thy means do His faithful servants enter on their eternal rest. Thou art indeed a " gate of heaven," through which we enter our heavenly country. Pray, then, for me, an exile from my true home. I am not worthy to hope for heaven, after having so often deserved hell, through my sins. Thou art my hope and help. Obtain for me the grace of conversion, and perseverance in good ; that thus I may be of the number of those happy just, who by thee enter into the kingdom of God's glory. Amen.

PRACTICE.

On this day beg of Mary, with peculiar earnestness, to procure for you the grace of a happy death. It is a most salutary practice of pious Christians to set apart one day in each month, in which they make a preparation for death. If circumstances prevent you from adopting this practice, you can at least have no difficulty, when preparing for the sacraments, to make the thought of death influence

you in a particular manner once a month. "Blessed is the man," says the devout A. Kempis, "that has always death before his eyes, and every day disposes himself to die."

ASPIRATION.

Open to us the gate of mercy, O Holy Mother of God.—S. John of Damascus.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.

MORNING STAR,

Pray for us.

"I am the root and stock of David, the bright and morning star."—Apoc. xxii. 16.

These words were spoken by our Divine Saviour to St. John, at the conclusion of that series of wonderful visions which were exhibited to the beloved disciple, and which are recorded by him in the book of the Apocalypse. They may be applied to Mary; as we find the same expression made use of by the inspired writer of the book of Ecclesiastical, to designate the virtue of Simon the high priest:—"He shone in his days as the morning star in the midst of a cloud."* Christ says, "that

* Eccl. i. 6.

to him who has overcome, He will give the morning star."* Hence, as according to St. Paul, "Star differeth from star in glory,"† the same epithet may be applied to two persons in very different senses. Jesus Christ is the root and stock of David—the bright and morning star; because he arose on men who were buried in darkness and the shadow of death; and because his coming is the prelude of that full manifestation of God's glory, which will be made to the faithful soul in heaven. Mary is called the bright and morning star, because she preceded the rising of the Sun of Eternal Justice; because her appearance among men was hailed by all the sons of God, as the pledge that He had not forgotten his ancient mercies, and that he was about to give the Redeemer, who had been so long and so anxiously expected. Hence the inspired writer of the Canticle of Canticles asks: "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning, rising fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?"‡

"Mary," says St. Thomas of Aquinas, "is called the star of the sea; for as those who sail on the ocean are directed to the port they seek, by observing the stars, so Christians are directed to glory by Mary." We are, in this world, as mariners on a tempestuous sea. We are steering for the port of heaven, and are in danger of striking on the hidden rocks with which the world abounds; and which are most to be feared, when it presents to us a calm and unruffled appearance, or when we approach the term of our course. We are exposed, every moment, to perish in the abyss of waters over

* Apoc. ii. 28. † 1 Cor. xv. 41. ‡ Cant. vi. 9.

which we pass, in which so many of our fellow-creatures have been engulfed, and whose treacherous surface retains no trace of the wrecks that have often drifted on it, but looks as tranquil as if it had never heard the shrieks of those who have perilled and lost an eternity on its faith. "Mary," says St. Bernard, "is that bright star of Jacob, whose ray enlightens the whole world, whose splendour shines conspicuous in heaven, and penetrates hell. It pervades the earth and warms—not the body but the soul, banishing vice and maturing virtue. For she is that bright and splendid star, elevated above this vast and spacious sea, who glitters by her merits, and enlightens by her example. If you find yourself tossed about by storms and tempests in the current of this world, turn not away your eyes from the brightness of this star, unless you wish to be overwhelmed by its waves. If the winds of temptation arise—if you strike on the rock of tribulation—look up to this star; call on Mary! If you are tossed about by the swellings of pride or ambition, of envy or detraction—look up to this star, call on Mary! If anger, or avarice, or concupiscence, agitate the bark of your mind—turn to Mary! When affrighted at the enormity of your crimes, or confounded at the defilements of your conscience, or terrified with the dread of the future judgment, you feel yourselves about to be involved in the whirlpool of despondency, or engulfed in the abyss of despair—think on Mary! In dangers, in difficulties, and doubts; think on Mary, and invoke her. Let her name never depart from your mouth or heart; and that you may obtain the benefit of her intercession, forget not to imitate

the example of her life. In following her, you cannot go astray ; in appealing to her, you cannot despair ; and in thinking on her, you cannot wander. While she supports you, you cannot fall ; while she protects you, you cannot fear ; while she guides you, you cannot feel fatigue ; and if she be propitious, you will arrive in safety."

The spouse in the Canticles is also described to be beautiful as the Moon, and this comparison most aptly represents the Blessed Virgin. As the moon shines by the light which is derived from the sun, and which she reflects ; so Mary is beautiful, because she has derived from God, the source of all light and beauty, an extraordinary participation of His divine light. Although the moon of itself is an opaque body, yet by reflecting the sun's light, it becomes, in some degree, an image of his glory ; so Mary, on account of her dignity of Mother of God, reflects the divine perfections, and presents to man the most perfect image of His beauty and holiness that can be found in a creature. As the moon, when seen in its full glory, obscures the stars, so the glory of Mary surpasses and obscures that of all other saints. As God made two great lights, the sun to rule the day, and the moon to rule the night, so, remarks a holy writer, Cardinal Hugo, "Jesus Christ, the Sun of Justice, shines out on the just with a glorious lustre, and has appointed his holy Mother to be the mirror of his perfections for sinners ;" that by seeing so much holiness in one of their own race, they might have no pretext for continuing longer in crime. We cannot gaze, with the naked eye, on the sun in his meridian splendour ; but we can view, without pain, the

pale beauty of the moon. The divine character of Jesus affords us a specious pretext for our unwillingness to imitate the bright example he has given us ; but when we recollect that Mary is a child of Adam like ourselves, distinguished only by the plenitude of grace which she received, and the supereminent dignity with which she was invested—we are encouraged and excited to conceive sentiments more worthy of the dignity of our nature. Let us, then, attend to the advice of the holy Pope Innocent III., and if we find ourselves “lying in the darkness of sin, raise our eyes to this mystic moon, and call on Mary !”

EXAMPLE.

In the month of November, 1838, the crew of a vessel which had just arrived at Paimpol, in France, forty-eight in number, accomplished a vow they had made in a most perilous voyage from Newfoundland. A terrific tempest had arisen, their sails were torn, and for three days they were in continual danger of finding a watery grave. The ship at length began to fill with water, and all hope of safety seemed lost, when the crew, by common consent, turned their eyes to the “Star of the sea,” and called on Mary. They promised that, if she saved them, they would visit in the most suppliant manner the church at Paimpol, where there is an image of Our Lady much venerated by the people. They had scarcely ended their prayer, when the weather became more calm, and the waves began to subside. Profiting by this providential change, they repaired their sails, and had a favourable wind till they reached

he coasts of Bretagne. They landed in safety at Knod, towards the decline of day, and their first act was to prostrate themselves on the ground, and give God thanks for their return. Then they intoned the litany of the Blessed Virgin, and advanced bare-footed and bare-headed, along the banks, and through the streets of Paimpol, to the church of the "Bonne Nouvelle." The people, attracted in crowds by the novelty of the sight, followed them, among whom were some who were actuated by a stronger and better feeling than mere curiosity. There were parents who went to give thanks for the return of their children; and wives to thank Mary for having restored their husbands to them. The tears streamed down every eye, and this immense multitude knelt down before the altar of that powerful Virgin, who has received from her Son the power to command the wind and waves.

The torches shed a dim light on the recess of the sanctuary, where stood the image of the Blessed Virgin, whose inclined head and extended arms seemed to say to all the unhappy, "Come to me; I am your Mother." These pious mariners with the most touching expression of sentiment, chaunted the hymn, "Ave Maris Stella," in which they were joined by the people:—

"Bright Mother of our Maker, hail!
 Thou Virgin ever blest,
 The ocean's star, by which we sail,
 And gain the port of rest,"*

* *Le Mois de Marie populaire*, Lille, 1839.

PRAYER.

O Virgin Mother! thou art indeed a joyful "Morning Star;" because thou didst announce to us Jesus the Sun of justice, the true light of the world. Thy auspicious birth was the aurora of that bright day, which brought salvation to the world. Through thy light, has the darkness of error and vice been dispelled, for thou enlightenest our hearts and makest us know Jesus, in whom are all treasures of light, and truth and grace. Happy they who follow thy guidance; thou wilt most certainly bring them to Jesus, the haven of salvation. O Holy Virgin, be to us light and life, that we may avoid the works of darkness and walk in the light of faith and innocence; and thus be worthy to see and admire thy dear Son Jesus, who dwells in light inaccessible. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Offer up a prayer for the diffusion of the Catholic faith.

ASPIRATION.

As the eyes of the handmaid are turned towards her mistress, so are my eyes turned to thee, O Holy Mother of God!

TWENTY-FOURH DAY.

HEALTH OF THE WEAK,

Pray for us.

“ A virtue went out from him, and healed all.” —
Luke vi. 19.

Jesus Christ is our great physician. While on earth a virtue went out from him and healed all ; his power was always displayed in relieving the sufferings of the sick and infirm ; and while his miracles attest his omnipotence, they display most conspicuously the mercy which is His peculiar characteristic. Not only did Jesus Christ himself exert his omnipotence for the relief of his suffering creatures, but he imparted to the Apostles the same power, and even told them, that those who believed in his name would do still greater wonders than he himself had performed. So great was the effect of this promise, that even the shadow of St. Peter, as he passed along, healed the sick. In every age the healing power of Christ has been experienced by those who have invoked it in the spirit of faith ; and in every age has he been mindful of those who served him on earth, and honoured their memory and name, by the numerous miracles which have been wrought in favour of such as sought their intercession. Can we then, for a moment, suppose that Mary's name will not plead powerfully for us, when we suffer from sick-

ness, or are alarmed at the approach of death, for which, perhaps, we may not be prepared. God seems to exert His omnipotence, in proportion to the merits of those in whose name it is invoked; He will not then turn away from the supplication of His holy Mother, when she asks of Him for us that health and strength which may be, perhaps, necessary for our salvation, and agreeable to the designs of His ever merciful providence.

While we invoke Mary as the health of the weak, we should not forget, that the infirmities of the body are trivial and unimportant, if compared with those of the soul. The former are the natural effect of our condition, and suppose in us no culpability; but may become the occasion of great merit, when patiently endured; they are the warning voices which announce to us the approach of death, which we cannot hope finally to escape. The infirmities of the soul, on the other hand, may be said to be the only ones which really deserve our solicitude. "Our fever," says St. Ambrose, "is avarice: our fever is lust; our fever is luxury; our fever is ambition, our fever is anger." These spiritual maladies are indeed most to be apprehended, because, unless they be remedied, they bring on the death of the soul—that is, they deprive us of God who is its life, and expose us to be buried for ever in the abyss of hell. It is especially on account of Mary's influence in obtaining efficacious remedies for these spiritual maladies, that the church styles her the "health of the weak." We may be satisfied that, much as her compassionate heart bleeds when she beholds us suffering from corporeal infirmity, she feels much more when she considers the spiritual weakness

and infirmity under which we labour, and which is to be dreaded in proportion as it is not felt by ourselves. Let us, then, apply to this source of spiritual health, which God has opened for us : let us ask of Mary to obtain for us a knowledge of our infirmity and a serious application of all our powers to remove it, and we shall find by experience the fulfilment of the words, which the church applies to her : "He that shall find me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord."*

The solicitude which we manifest for our corporeal health too often forms a striking contrast with our indifference to the state of our souls. A slight sickness fills us with anxiety : we deem no precaution too great, no remedy too disagreeable, provided we regain our lost health. In this we but obey the instinct of nature, and the command of God, which imposes on us the obligation of doing all that we can to preserve His gifts. But is not our soul entitled at least to some share of our vigilance and care ? Why, then, do many remain so unmoved, when conscience tells them, that there is no soundness in them, that their soul is in reality dead, while it has the appearance of life ? Ah, what blindness, to fear so much a temporal death, and not dread that which is eternal ! We should imitate the prudence of those who, when they labour under many infirmities, apply themselves particularly to the cure of that from which they have most to fear, while at the same time they do not neglect to prevent the others from assuming an alarming character. We should

* Prov. viii. 35.

see what is the spiritual malady from which we have most to apprehend ; whether it be pride, avarice, love of pleasure, excessive fondness of company, or ambition : and we should apply ourselves to overcome it with peculiar attention. We should not relax our efforts until we had either entirely subdued it, or so far succeeded as to require only ordinary attention. To overcome our predominant or ruling passion ; to deliver ourselves from the infirmity, which either has already taken, or if neglected, will most certainly assume a mortal character, this is what we should ask with peculiar earnestness from her who is the " health of the weak."

EXAMPLE.

In the year 1792, when the excesses of impiety in France involved the faithful Christian in all the dangers of a sanguinary persecution, M. Detrez, of Lille, received priest's orders in a foreign country, and shortly afterwards returned in disguise to his native city, where he devoted himself to the service of his fellow-citizens. For a long time he exercised the ministry there in private, although he was aware of the danger to which he thus exposed himself. Like the apostle St. Paul, he feared none of these temporal evils, and he looked on life as valueless, unless he could preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, and celebrate the praises of Mary, his Virgin Mother. He was at length arrested and confined in the infectious dungeons of Lille. This was, doubtless, a provision of Providence which thus prepared him for his future office of chaplain of a vast prison, by per-

sitting him to experience the evils in which he was one day to sympathize. On being restored to liberty he laid the foundation of an Orphan Asylum in the village of Los, near Lille.

In all the rooms of this establishment he placed an image of the Blessed Virgin, and caused the Orphans to sing the Canticle of the "Magnificat" every Saturday, in honour of their holy Mother. To all those whom he directed in the paths of virtue, he earnestly recommended this devotion, and was accustomed to say, that he had great confidence in all who practised it. He especially recommended it to those charged with the direction of the Magdalene Asylums, which he had instituted; as also to the community of the "daughters of the Infant Jesus," which he established for the attendance on the sick, and the instruction of the ignorant. On all the festivals of the Blessed Virgin, the joy of his heart manifested itself in his countenance, and inspired others with zeal for the promotion of this devotion. When made chaplain of the prison of Los, —which was formerly an abbey founded by St. Bernard, M. Detrez incessantly recommended his dear convicts, as he used to call them, to the intercession of this devout servant of Mary; and was the efficacious instrument of the conversion of many sinners, by making them recite the prayer, "Remember, O most pious Virgin," etc. In the year 1832, he was attacked by a mortal malady while in the monastery of Esquermes, to the restoration of which he had mainly contributed. He was immediately removed to the Orphan Asylum, which he had founded, and which was his usual residence, and had the consolation of giving up his

soul to God in the village of Los, which is consecrated to the Blessed Virgin. His remains were interred in the church of the Blessed Virgin, opposite the image of Our Lady of Grace, before which he was wont, every Saturday, to offer up the holy sacrifice of the Mass, for the happiness of his country.

PRAYER.

In all the infirmities of the body, and all the maladies of the soul, be thou, O Mary ! my refuge and my relief. Numberless are the sick who through thee have recovered health. Relying on thy power and goodness, I fly to thee, and implore thee to heal my infirmities, and obtain for me perfect health of body and of soul ; that I may be the better able to serve thee and thy divine Son. At all times thou hast been the help and consolation of the infirm. Thou dost lighten their sufferings, and dost obtain for them health, when it is conducive to their salvation : thou dost assist them to make a happy death. Assist me, then, O most amiable Mother ; obtain for me a release from all sufferings, or patience to endure them in the spirit of resignation to God's holy will, that thus all my trials may tend to purify my soul, and detach it from all earthly ties. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Visit some sick person, in honour of Mary.

ASPIRATION.

To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve !

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

REFUGE OF SINNERS,

*Pray for us.**“Thou art my refuge.”—Ps. xxx. 4.*

In the Old Law, God appointed cities of refuge, to which such of the Jews, as through inadvertence should have killed a man, might flee from the indignation of his relatives; who otherwise might listen more to the voice of passion than to the dictates of justice, and inflict on him a greater punishment than his crime deserved. The judges of the city, in which the homicide had taken refuge, having examined into the matter, were, either to deliver him up to the relatives of the deceased, should they find that the murder was the effect of deliberate malice, or, if otherwise, preserve him from their blind fury. Mary has been always considered the refuge of sinners. St. Irenæus says, that she is the “advocate of Eve,”—that is, that she, the Mother of God, is an intercessor with her Divine Son, for the children of the guilty mother of mankind. Hence St. John of Damascus, speaking in the person of the Blessed Virgin, says: “I am a city of refuge for all who flee to me.” What a consolation for us poor sinners, to know that we have this powerful advocate to plead for us; that this city of God, of which such glorious things are said, is ever open to receive us, and protect us within its pre-

cincts, from the just anger of God ! “ We praise her humility,” says St. Bernard, “ we admire her virginity ; but her mercy is sweeter to the unfortunate ; we cling more tenderly to her mercy ; we remember it more frequently ; we invoke it more unceasingly.”

We read in history, that a noble lady received under her protection an unfortunate man, who declared himself to be guilty of homicide, through the sudden impulse of passion. What was her horror on discovering that she sheltered the murderer of her own son ! This did not, however, make her forget her promise, or prevent her from pitying the misfortune of him who had inflicted so severe a wound on her heart. Alas ! how can we read this affecting instance of magnanimity, and not think on Mary, the refuge of sinners ! We have slain her beloved Son ; because it was our sins that crucified him, and not the cruelty or malice of the Jews. We have done this—not under the sudden and maddening influence of passion, but coolly and deliberately, with a full knowledge of the act we did, of its heinousness in the sight of God, and of the awful consequences in which it involved us. And we have done this, not once, or twice, or thrice, but numberless times ; for as often as we have offended God by mortal sin, so often have we “ crucified the Son of God, and made a mockery of him.”* And yet, notwithstanding our accustomed guilt, Mary stretches forth her hands to receive us, and shelter us from the wrath we so justly deserve. She is that affectionate mother of Thecuah, who appeared

* Heb. vi. 6.

before David to implore his mercy for her unhappy child, who had slain his brother, and whose punishment would but add grief to her grief, and deprive her of her only surviving comfort.* Mary, indeed, cannot now feel grief; but her charity for souls, redeemed by the blood of her Divine Son, is so great, that she asks for each one who flees to her for refuge, with all the earnestness of a mother pleading for her only child. "Go," says St. Bernard, "to the Mother of mercy, and show her the wounds sin has inflicted on thee, and she will powerfully intercede for thee. The Son will certainly listen to His Mother." "By her," says St. Chrysostom, "we obtain the pardon of our sins."

It is impossible for us to conceive the extent of Mary's merciful disposition towards us. The Saints of ancient, as well as of modern, times have celebrated her clemency. "Mary," says St. Leo, "is so endued with feelings of compassion, that she not only deserves to be called merciful, but even mercy itself." "Mary," says St. Gregory the Great, "by how much she is higher and holier than we are, is more clement and compassionate to converted sinners." "O Virgin," cries out St. Bernard, "the judge and the culprit are both thy children; thou canst not suffer any discord between them." In a word, the history of the church, as well as the writings of the great men who have in every age illustrated it, attest the wonderful influence of Mary's intercession on behalf of poor sinners. Those who have returned to God after having wearied themselves in the ways of iniquity,

* 2 Kings, xiv.

have found by experience how efficacious was their confidence in Mary's mercy, and how much their hopes of pardon were strengthened, when they looked up to this refuge of sinners. They felt that God could not reject the prayers of one so holy and so merciful, even when offered up for persons so unworthy as they knew themselves to be. We must, however, guard against a most dangerous illusion. It would not be confidence in Mary, but the most flagrant abuse of her goodness, to make it a motive for deferring our conversion. Mary is, indeed, the refuge of sinners, but it is of those who are resolved to fly to her, by renouncing sin and doing penance for it. To entertain other sentiments,—to suppose that we could please her, while we displease God, or are not seriously resolved to serve Him, would be presumption, the more dangerous, as it would seem to reckon on some extraordinary instances of her wonderful influence in the conversion of dying sinners, which are narrated in well-attested histories. God, in His inscrutable counsels, sometimes works a miracle of mercy, as in the case of the dying thief; but this is not the ordinary course of His providence. Mary has sometimes obtained the grace of perfect conversion for sinners, to all human appearance, the most unworthy of it. These instances are, however, exceptions to the general ways of providence; and are afforded us by God, to repel despair, and not to encourage presumption.

EXAMPLE.

Whoever has had the grievous misfortune to offend God, cannot do better than fly to Mary,

in a spirit of penance, to obtain, through her, reconciliation with God. Among the innumerable examples of this truth, which the annals of the church record, that of St. Mary, of Egypt, is particularly remarkable. This celebrated penitent was born in Egypt in the fourth century, and was converted from a sinful course of life in a very remarkable manner. She devoted the remainder of her days to the practice of the most austere penance, as she related in the following manner to the Abbot Zosimus, who met her by chance in the desert.

In the twelfth year of her age, contrary to the will of her parents, she came to Alexandria, where she spent seventeen years in the habitual commission of every base and degrading crime. She one day saw crowds embarking for Jerusalem, to celebrate the festival of the exaltation of the Holy Cross ; she accompanied them, and during the journey continued her irregularities. On arriving at Jerusalem, she mingled with the crowd that flocked to the church where the Holy Cross was to be publicly exposed ; when she arrived at the porch, she attempted to enter with the rest, but felt herself restrained by an irresistible power. This happened three or four times. She was much moved ; and not doubting but that her sinfulness was the cause why she was not permitted to enter the church, she burst into tears. While she lingered about the church-door, sighing and weeping, and beating her breast in a spirit of compunction, she looked up to a picture of the Mother of God, painted on the wall. The sight encouraged her, and she addressed the Refuge of sinners, in these words : “ Holy Virgin, Mother of God, I know

that the sins in which I live render me unworthy to look up to thee. Thou art a pure and spotless Virgin. Thou who art so pure and holy must have a horror for a soul, so immersed in guilt as mine is. However, I have always heard that the Saviour, whom thou hadst the happiness to bear in thy virginal womb, came into this world to call sinners to penance. I implore thee to assist me in my distress. Permit me to enter the church, O Queen of Heaven ! Grant that, although unworthy, I may be allowed to enter, that I may not be deprived of the happiness of seeing that precious cross, on which thy son poured forth all His blood : I promise thee, in the name of the same Redeemer, never more to relapse into my heinous offences. As soon as I shall have seen the cross, I will abandon all, and go wheresoever thou, O Holy Virgin, my advocate and intercessor, wilt tell me."

Having finished this prayer, she felt within herself great confidence. She made another effort to enter the church, and did not experience the least difficulty. She revered the holy cross, cast herself on her knees, and amidst abundance of tears, kissed the ground of the holy places ; being deeply touched with the thought of God's mercy and goodness in receiving sinners, whenever they return to Him in a spirit of penance. Having satisfied her devotion, she returned to the image of the holy Virgin, and kneeling down before it, returned thanks for the grace she had obtained through her, and besought her direction in her design of doing penance and reforming her life. While she thus poured out her soul before the image of Mary, she heard a voice, as if from a distance, saying : " If you will pass the Jordan,

you shall find rest." She immediately arose, and turning her weeping eyes to the picture, said : " Virgin of Virgins, through whom salvation has been brought to man, do not abandon me : I beseech thee grant me this favour." She immediately hurried to pass the Jordan, and buried herself in the wildest part of the desert, where she spent forty-seven years, in the practice of the most severe austerities. During many years, she was exposed to the most violent temptations from the infernal enemy of her soul, but always was assisted and sustained by Mary. " In all my combats,"—said she herself to the Abbot Zosimus—" I raised my heart to that immaculate Virgin, who had been so merciful to me ; I begged her to assist me in my penance and solitude, and she has never forsaken me. She has been my protectress in all my difficulties." The holy penitent at length obtained, through the intercession of Mary, the grace to receive from the above-named Abbot Zosimus, the last sacraments at her death, and thus passed from the desert which had been the witness of her extraordinary austerities, to that paradise, which God has prepared—not for those who imagine that they are rich in virtue and stand in need of nothing—but for the publicans and sinners who return to Him by a sincere repentance.

PRAYER.

O Mother of Mercy ! thou dost not repel any one who flies to thee for refuge. The greatest sinners are received by thee, when, in the spirit of penance, and with a contrite and humble heart, they fly to thee for help. Thou dost interpose

between them and between Jesus, thy divine Son, our Lord and Judge : Thou dost shield them from the inflictions of his severe justice : Thou dost defend them against all the attacks of the infernal enemy : Thou expellest from their souls unbelief and perplexity, and dost infuse into their hearts the vivifying balm of hope. O Sacred Refuge of Sinners ! how many sinners hast thou rescued from the power of hell ; how many hast thou brought over to penance and change of life ! Compassionate me also : to thee do I cry, a poor, banished child of Eve. Obtain for me compunction for my sins, and the grace never more to commit them. Reconcile me with thy divine Son ; and present me to him in the hour of my death. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Recommend to the heart of Mary some one of your friends, whom you know to be living in the habit of mortal sin, or in the neglect of the positive duties of religion.

ASPIRATION.

Let those be silent in thy praise, O Sacred Refuge of Sinners, who have not experienced thy mercy !—S. Bernard.

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.

COMFORT OF THE AFFLICTED,

HELP OF CHRISTIANS,

Pray for us.

“ Give me my people for whom I request.”—
Esther, vii. 3.

We read in the book of Esther that this holy woman, who, amidst the splendour of a most magnificent court, retained the faith and piety which had distinguished her before her elevation to the throne, was the occasion of saving her people from utter extirpation. The crafty Aman, instigated by malicious envy, had obtained from king Assuerus an order, whereby all the Jews throughout his vast dominions were to be massacred on an appointed day. Mardochai, the uncle of Queen Esther, imparted the sad intelligence to this princess, who, although not included in it, failed not to grieve at the approaching destruction of her people. Agreeably to the advice of her uncle, she resolved to appear before the king, (although at the risk of incurring his displeasure), and to petition him on behalf of her afflicted people. Knowing, however, that God alone could cause her to succeed in her perilous undertaking, she resolved to prepare herself by fasting and prayer, in which she ordered all the Jews that dwelt in the royal city to join her. After a most

rigorous fast of three days and three nights, she ventured to approach the king, and petition for her people. He granted her request; and the machinations of the enemies of God's people became the occasion of their triumph, and elevation throughout the empire. How admirably does not Esther represent Mary, the Queen of heaven, who petitions God for her people—her fellow-creatures here below, against whom a decree, infinitely more just than that of Assuerus for the extirpation of the Jews, has been sent forth for the punishment of their rebellion against the Divine Majesty!

The supereminent greatness and holiness of Mary are calculated to impress us with most profound respect and admiration. All the virtues which she possessed attract us by their excellence. But the mercy of Mary—the sympathy which she has with us in our sufferings—and the inconceivable desire she has to assist us in all our difficulties, are titles to our gratitude and love, which should call forth the warmest expression of these feelings. Truly may we apply to her the praise given to the brave woman mentioned in the Scripture: "The law of clemency is in her mouth."* Although raised infinitely above us by a dignity which the highest of the angelic host views with awe, still she does not forget those from among whom she has been taken, and who are exposed to the malice of that murderer from the beginning, who is more crafty and more cruel than was Aman, the Assyrian. "Dost thou, O blessed Virgin," says St. Peter Damian to her—

* Prov. xxxi.

"dost thou therefore forget our lowliness, because thou art so highly exalted? — No; such mercy as thine could not forget such misery as ours." What a consolation to reflect, that we have in the court of the heavenly king so powerful and so merciful an advocate, who is ever ready to plead our cause. If the supplication of Moses, on behalf of his unworthy people, were so powerful with God, as to cause him to order this chosen servant not to pray for them, lest He should be induced to relent and not execute the decree which His justice called for; how much more powerfully will not Mary plead for us? May we not suppose that God will say to her, as He said to Moses: "Let me alone, that my wrath may be kindled against them, and that I may destroy them."* The charity of Mary in heaven is certainly not inferior to that of Moses on earth; and she, like him, will offer a holy violence to God, by the earnestness and constancy of her prayer. Who will despair, when protected by so powerful an advocate?

An unlimited confidence in the intercession of Mary, and a prompt appeal to her in all our necessities and dangers, should be the result of the consideration of her influence and compassion. When we address God Almighty, we are overwhelmed with confusion at the contemplation of his infinite Majesty, and the remembrance of the innumerable offences we have committed against Him. "Christ," says St. Bernard, "could suffice; for, indeed, all our sufficiency is from Him; —but we have need of an intercessor with Christ,

• Exodus, xxxii. 10.

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nor is there any one more influential than Mary.” —And again : “ You were afraid to appear before the Father, and, terrified at the sound of his voice, you concealed yourself behind the trees :* He gave you Jesus as a Mediator. What cannot such a Son obtain from such a Father? He will, indeed, be heard for his reverence ; for the Father loveth the Son. But perhaps in Him also you fear the divine Majesty ; because although He became man He remains God. Do you wish for an advocate with Him? Have recourse to Mary. Mary is a pure human creature, not only pure from all contamination, but also pure by the singular excellence of her nature. I do not hesitate to say, that she also will be heard for her reverence. The Son will listen to the Mother, and the Father to the Son. My dear children,” continues this holy doctor and most tender lover of Mary, “ she is the ladder, by which sinners may ascend to heaven ; she is my greatest hope, and the whole ground of my hope. For can the Son repulse her, or be himself repulsed ? will he refuse to hear, or not be himself heard ? ” —Who can read these words of this glorious Saint, and not feel his confidence in Mary’s protection wonderfully strengthened ; and not feel, that if the pious Monica obtained the conversion of Augustin by her prayers, much more will Mary obtain God’s grace for us, who are her children, and for whose eternal salvation she feels much more zeal, than ever Monica did for that of her beloved child ?

* An allusion to Adam in Paradise, when he sought to conceal himself from God.

EXAMPLE.

The famous victory which the Christians gained, in 1571, over the Turks, near Lepanto, in the Ionian Sea, will for ever be a monument of Mary's title to the appellation of "Help of Christians." During more than a century before that time, the Turks caused the greatest anxiety and apprehension among the Christians. They gained victory after victory. God permitted this, to punish and humble the Christians, and by this humiliation to awaken their faith ; as also to manifest His glory and power by honouring Mary through the wonders he was to work for her servants.

The Turkish Sultan, Selim, the son and successor of Soliman, had taken the isle of Cyprus from the Venetians ; and, elated with his success, thought of nothing less than of subjecting all the Christian kingdoms to his sway. At that time the chair of St. Peter at Rome was filled by St. Pius V., whose zeal for the faith, and confidence in the intercession of Mary, were unlimited. The Pope was greatly alarmed at the danger to which Christendom was exposed ; but with undoubting confidence in Mary, he united with the Venetians and Spaniards, to repel the common enemy. There was, indeed, no proportion between the Turkish and Christian fleets ; and in all human appearance, it must have seemed foolish to contend with such a superior enemy ; but the holy Pope did not for a moment doubt but that Mary would obtain victory for the Christians. He accordingly ordered general fast days, and specially exhorted all Christians to flee to Mary for protection. All Europe was roused by the approach-

ing danger, and joined in this devotion; and every where processions and other devotional practices in honour of the Mother of God were established. As Pius sent his blessing to John of Austria, the Admiral of the Christian fleet, he gave him the strongest assurance that he would gain the battle. He ordered him, at the same time, to dismiss all disorderly soldiers, or such as thirsted after plunder; lest God should withdraw his protection from the cause, in consequence of such sinners. Like another Moses, Pius raised his hands incessantly to heaven, and sought, through Mary, the Mother of mercy, the blessing of God on the Christian arms. The battle took place on the 7th of October, 1571, at Lepanto. Both sides engaged with the greatest fury; and, for a few moments, the Christians seemed to be on the point of yielding to the superior power of the infidels. Mary, however, had heard the prayers of her children, and the God of armies decided the cause in favour of the Christians. The Turks were completely beaten; they lost upwards of thirty thousand men, and their formidable fleet was for ever destroyed. The holy Pope announced the victory at the very moment in which it was gained. He was then engaged in conference with the cardinals, when suddenly stopping the discourse, he raised his eyes to heaven, and said to them: "Enough of business to-day; at present we have nothing better to do than to thank God for the victory he has given to the Christian arms." The sequel showed that at the very moment in which Pius spoke these words, the battle was gained at Lepanto; and the holy Pope was fully convinced that this victory was to

be ascribed to the intercession of the Mother of God. To leave a perpetual memorial of this great benefit, he inserted in her litany the words, "*Help of Christians, pray for us,*" and instituted a special festival for the same purpose. Gregory XIII. ordered it to be celebrated throughout the church, on the first Sunday of October, which is therefore called "Rosary Sunday." In like manner, in the year 1683, the Turks were completely defeated by the Emperor Leopold I., before Vienna, which they had besieged with an army of 216,000 men, and a large park of artillery. They had laid the whole country waste; had slain or enslaved thousands of Christians, and threatened the whole empire with ruin. Meanwhile, the protection of Mary was fervently invoked throughout all the provinces; public processions and supplications were made in her honour. When the danger seemed most alarming, they received help from heaven. On the 12th of September, the Turks were attacked by the Christian army, which, although vastly inferior in numbers, succeeded in giving a complete overthrow to the enemies of the faith. For the perpetual commemoration of this signal benefit, Innocent XI. established the festival of the Holy Name of Mary, which he ordered to be kept on the Sunday immediately following the 8th of September, the solemnity of her birth. It is acknowledged by all, that these two victories, especially that of Lepanto, were the means of preserving Europe from the evils of a Mahommedan invasion. Mary is, then, the true Esther, by whose powerful intercession the evils, which the enemies of

God's people designed for them, have been turned on themselves.

PRAYER.

O most amiable Virgin Mary! never did any one appeal to thee in vain. In whatever distress or difficulty I may find myself, I am certain to obtain help and relief through thee. Thou art the "consolation of the afflicted;" thou driest up the tears of those who, in this land of exile, raise their eyes to thee. Thou art the help of Christians. As Mother of Christ, thou dost consider thyself to be the protectress and advocate of all Christians. O amiable and powerful Mother! graciously assist us, and rescue us from all misery and affliction. Help thy Christian people, who, on all sides, are so severely pressed. Protect the church of thy Son, that her enemies may not prevail over her. Defend the faithful, and especially those who are in danger of losing the precious treasure of faith. Humble their enemies, confound their persecutors, and rule over those who invoke thy name, and put their trust in thee. Show thyself to be our Mother. Pray for me, that I may lead a Christian life, that thereby I may deserve to enjoy eternal happiness with God. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Give some alms to-day in honour of Mary. Be thus the comforter of the afflicted, and the help of Christians.

ASPIRATION.

If thou dost abandon us, what will befall us, O life of Christians!—S. Germanus.

 TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.

QUEEN OF ANGELS,

“Rule thou over us; and thy son.”—Jud. viii. 22.

Many are the titles by which Mary is the queen of angels. She is the Mother of Christ, who created the angels, “for in Him,” says St. Paul, “were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations, or principalities or powers: all things were created by Him and in Him.”* She is, therefore, their Queen, according to the observation of St. John of Damascus. “Mary,” says he, “was made the queen of all creatures, because she was made the Mother of the Creator.” She is their queen, because, as she is elevated far above them in dignity and glory, they look up to her with the reverence, which such superiority is so well calculated to excite, and had she no other title to their homage, they would, on the sole principle of her superior greatness and glory, say: “Rule thou over us; and thy son.” She is, in

* Colos. i. 16.

fine, their queen, because her son Jesus Christ is the restorer not only of earth but heaven ; according to the decree of God, who has willed " to re-establish all things in Christ, whether in heaven or on earth." By Christ's having redeemed man, those seats of glory, which were vacated by the disobedience of the fallen angels, are filled up ; and the angels—whose charity is great in proportion as they approach God, who is charity itself—rejoice at the elevation of every child of Adam, who, through His redeeming merits, is raised to the glory which their unfaithful companions forfeited. Mary is, then, the queen of angels.

The contemplation of Mary forms a portion of the beatitude of the angels. As they admire God's works in proportion to their excellence, so they find in Mary—the most excellent of God's creatures—more subject for admiration, than in the contemplation of the immense orbs of light with which the fiat of the Creator has studded the heavens, or all the created glory of that Paradise, which St. John describes in the Apocalypse, under such glowing imagery. They find more subject for the exercise of their sublime intelligence, in contemplating her instrumentality in the mystery of the incarnation, and in the other mysteries of her life, than they do in considering all the other wonders of God's providence on his creatures. If the faithful servants of Mary on earth have felt their hearts inflamed by the consideration of the amiableness and beauty of the celestial queen ; what must be the feelings of

* Ephes. i. 10.

those blessed spirits, who see her, as she is, and whose superior nature renders them more capable of appreciating the wonders of God's grace in her than we can possibly be. It is not, then, without reason, that the church says that the angels of God rejoiced at the assumption of this heavenly queen. "Mary is assumed into heaven: the angels rejoice."

Mary's title as "Queen of angels" should remind us, that we also are destined to enjoy the society of angels, and with them admire the wonders of God's power in this heavenly queen. We should remember that God has deputed some of these heavenly spirits to be the guardians of men on earth, according to that of the Psalmist: "He has given his angels charge of thee, lest, perhaps, thou dash thy foot against a stone;" as also the words of Christ: "Their angels in heaven always see the face of my father who is in heaven."* Each one has one of these guardian spirits, to protect him in dangers and assist him in difficulties. When we invoke Mary as Queen of angels, the thought of our future companionship with them for eternity should make us endeavour to lead lives of angelic innocence. Gratitude for the care they take of us, and for the desire they have for our salvation, should produce in our souls a desire of attending to all the holy inspirations, which they communicate to our souls; that thus we may prove ourselves faithful servants of the queen of angels, and prepare for the high destiny, that awaits us, of enjoying God in their society for an endless eternity.

* Matt. xviii. 10.

EXAMPLE.

On this day the church honours the memory of St. Maria Magdalene de Pazzi, who may be proposed as a model of devotion to the Blessed Virgin. The royal prophet says, that God is wonderful in all his Saints; but he gave this holy virgin extraordinary proofs of his love, power, and wisdom. While yet a child, she was the special object of His favour; and in her earliest years she manifested so tender a love for God, and such zeal for the exercise of all virtue, that she seemed more like an angel than a mortal creature. She especially watched over the purity of her heart, and laboured to serve God with all fidelity and perfection. Jesus and Mary were the objects which engrossed her thoughts. She had her eyes ever turned to Mary, either to obtain through her the grace of God, or to learn from her example how to correspond with it, and thus, in all things, obey Jesus. In all her practices of devotion, she had special reference to the Mother of God. When she meditated on the mysteries of the Redeemer,—on his life on earth, or on his glory in heaven,—she always thought on the part that Mary had in these mysteries, and how extensively she had co-operated in their accomplishment. On account of this relation, the affections of love, respect, gratitude, and confidence, which rose in her heart towards Jesus, were at the same time directed to Mary, who had brought him forth, and given him up for the world's redemption. Magdalene entered the Carmelite order at Florence; from the moment that she solemnly renounced the world, she redoubled her fervour; dedicated herself unreser-

vedly to the love of God ; and laboured incessantly to honour his holy Mother. The Queen of Angels often appeared to her, to encourage and confirm her in piety. God had permitted her to suffer, for many years, the most violent temptations ; but, in all her trials, she failed not to recur to Mary, and obtained, through her, strength and courage to overcome all the attacks of the enemy of her soul. She commended all her companions to the powerful protection of this heavenly Queen, who, in a wonderful manner, made her conscious with how motherly a care she watched over those who sought her protection. Her devotion to this Queen of Angels was particularly conspicuous on the days dedicated to her memory, for the celebration of which she prepared herself with great care, and which she spent in more than ordinary attention to prayer. These were for her, indeed, real festivals. She was entirely absorbed in the contemplation of the mysteries these days commemorated ; and so acceptable to God did this render her, that on these occasions she not unfrequently received extraordinary favours, in which she beheld the glory of Mary exhibited in the clearest light. These supernatural graces made her advance daily in her love of God, and in reverence for the Queen of Angels. Magdalene had the most tender devotion to the cross : she desired nothing more than to suffer with her suffering Saviour, and thus be made conformable to Him. Hence her constant maxim was : " Let me suffer, and not die."—While most people fly the cross, and even the good look forward with delight to the termination of their sufferings, Magdalene had so great a love for the cross, that

she wished for nothing more than to be united with Jesus, the suffering spouse of her soul; and hence asked God to prolong her life, that she might be enabled to suffer more and greater things for His sake. "Let me suffer, and not die." The example of the constancy with which the Mother of sorrows beheld the death of her divine Son encouraged and sustained her. God heard the prayers of this angelic creature, and permitted her to experience the severest and most afflicting trials. He even deprived her of those interior consolations, which He seldom refuses to his servants in their last hours. Magdalene bore this affliction with patience, and even gloried in tribulation. Trusting in the protection of Mary, she gave back her pure soul to God in the year 1607.

PRAYER.

O Heavenly Queen, thou dost excel the highest of the angelic host in merit, in grace, and in holiness. All heavenly spirits bow down before thee, and praise and glorify thee—as the most perfect of God's creatures—as the most special object of his complacency—that most blessed among women, who was found worthy to conceive and bring forth Him, who has given life and being to all creatures! Honour, glory, and benediction be to thee, on the throne of thy greatness, to which God has exalted thee. In unison with the whole court of heaven, I render to thee the tribute of my homage. I choose thee to be my Queen, and place myself under thy protection. From thy throne of glory, cast a gracious look on me, who am surrounded by so many dangers. Pray for

me to Jesus thy Son, that I may imitate the purity of angels, while on earth, and thus merit to be associated to their glorious choirs in eternity. Queen of angels, obtain for me this favour. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Devotion to your guardian angel.

ASPIRATION.

O Mary, would that I could love thee, as the angels of God love thee!—Diego Martinez.



TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.



QUEEN OF PATRIARCHS,

QUEEN OF PROPHETS,

Pray for us,

"She shall crush thy head."—Gen. iii. 15.

The mind can imagine nothing more venerable among men, than the long line of patriarchs which connects Moses with Adam. Mary is said in a special manner to be their queen; because she was the mother of Him, whose hope consoled them for the loss of primeval happiness and inno-

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cence, and sustained them in all the trials of their pilgrimage here below. Adam beholds in her the mysterious creature, who, by bringing forth the Redeemer who cancelled the decree of God's justice against him and all his posterity, was the means of repairing his transgression, and crushing the head of the infernal serpent who had seduced Eve. Abel beholds in her the mother of Him, whose sacrifice his own death so well prefigured. Noe regards her as the mystic ark of which that, in which he and his family were saved from the deluge, was but a type, and was the means of saving, not one family, but all nations, from being overwhelmed by the deluge of iniquity. Abraham venerates her as the mother of that blessed seed, promised to him, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. Isaac sees in her the Virgin, whose mysterious fecundity was typified by the benediction given to the sterility of his mother, Sarah; and the sacrifice of whose Son, his own sacrifice on Mount Moria prefigured. Jacob beholds in her the mystic ladder, which he saw when he was fleeing into Mesopotamia from the face of Esau; whose feet stood on the earth while the top thereof touched the heavens—on the steps of which the angels of God ascended and descended, while the Lord himself leaned on the summit, and renewed to him the promise of a future Redeemer, which he had made to Abraham and Isaac.* Joseph venerates in her that stainless purity, of which he himself had given an illustrious example; as also the bright reward which was given to it, in making her the mother

* Gen. xxviii. 12, 13, 14.

of the Saviour of the world, as it had made him the Saviour of the land of Egypt. Who, then, can conceive the glory and veneration which Mary receives, as Queen of the patriarchs ?

She is also styled the Queen of prophets, because Christ her son was the great object of prophecy. After the deliverance of the Jewish people from the bondage of Egypt, God raised up a series of prophets, who foretold the future coming of the Messiah, and detailed all the circumstance of his birth, life, and passion. Moses venerates in her the mother of that prophet whom God promised by him to the Jewish people, and whom all the sacrifices of the law prefigured. Josue honours her, as the mother of the true Josue or Jesus, whose victories acquired for men the title to the true land of promise. Samuel reverences her as the mysterious root of Jesse, which budded forth salvation to the nations ; and which, in the person of David, he had been the instrument of placing over Judea. Isaias admires her as the accomplishment of that glorious prophecy which he made to Achaz ; and as the mother of that prince of peace, whose birth he celebrated, and whose glories and humiliations he foretold. Elias sees in her that hope of man, which was prefigured by the mystic cloud, which was the forerunner of those abundant showers that refreshed a world, which by its iniquity had made the heavens of brass for the sons of men. Jeremias reveres her as the restorer of that Jerusalem, over whose ruins he wept ; and the mother of Him, who brought back the people from a more severe captivity than that of Babylon. Daniel honours her as the proximate cause of the shortening of the capti-

vity of the human race, by giving to the world Him, by whom iniquity was abolished, and everlasting justice fulfilled. Micheas beholds her, whose virginal maternity he had present to his view when he foretold, that Bethlehem of Juda was to be the temporal birth-place of Him, whose going forth is from the days of eternity. In a word, as all the prophets foretold Christ, all rejoice in the contemplation of His Virgin Mother, who, in bringing forth Jesus, accomplished all the prophecies of the law, and was herself a prophetess, by foretelling that all generations should call her blessed.

The providence of God in preparing the world for the appearance of His Divine Son in human flesh is most worthy of our admiration. A series of prophecies, which commenced immediately after the fall of man, was continued for near four thousand years, and increased in clearness and minuteness of detail, in proportion as the happy term approached, in which they were to be accomplished. This was a preparation most worthy of God, and well calculated to give us a lively faith in the mysteries announced by the Redeemer, and an exalted idea of the benefits He has conferred on us. Well may we apply to ourselves what Jesus said to the Jews: "Many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them."* Let us endeavour to imagine with what feelings of veneration the just who lived before Christ looked forward to that mysterious Virgin, who was to con-

* Math. xiii. 17.

ceive the Son of the Most High, and give to the world the long expected Messiah. How much does the fervour of these holy souls, who saw the glories of His reign through the dimness of futurity, reproach us for our indifference to the benefits we actually possess, but which we do not sufficiently appreciate! Ah, let us fly to Mary, and ask of her to obtain for us from Jesus, the grace to know the inestimable happiness of living in the noon-tide light of his revelation. Let us never be "rebels to the light," but, on the contrary, profit by it, to advance on our journey, going from virtue to virtue, until we arrive at the term of our course, and be permitted to behold the splendours of His glory, who "dwelleth in light inaccessible."

EXAMPLE.

St. Bernard, the first abbot of Clairvaux, was a great ornament, and pillar of the church, in the twelfth century. He did much for the promotion of God's glory, by the unction of his eloquence, his apostolic zeal, and the holiness of his life. Devotion to Mary was his characteristic virtue. No one can read the prayers or sermons he composed in her honour without feeling himself moved. Bernard put himself under her protection, even from his very childhood, and the Mother of mercy shewed him, on many occasions, how acceptable to her was his devotion. When young he had a vision of the Queen of heaven, by which he learned much on the incarnation. This vision enkindled in his heart the strongest love for Jesus and Mary, and gave him the idea of a great work,

which he afterwards composed, to honour the Mother of God and her divine Son. Among other favours which he received from Mary was the instantaneous restoration of his health, when he lay dangerously ill, and his physicians had given up all hopes of his recovery. Bernard endeavoured to inflame all hearts with devotion to the Queen of heaven. To excite the faithful to have confidence in her intercession, he was accustomed to say : " She does not want power to help us, for she is the Mother of God ; nor yet good will, for she is the Mother of Mercy, and our Mother also. She is not a mother merely of the just, but also of sinners." St. Bernard may be justly called " the panegyrist of Mary ;" because none of the holy fathers and doctors of the church have spoken of the greatness and goodness of Mary, with more unction and eloquence. His writings would alone suffice to proclaim her praise to the end of the world, and to enkindle the love of her in all hearts. He died in the 62d year of his age, in 1153, and was buried in his church, before the altar of that holy Virgin, whom he so tenderly loved, and so faithfully served.

PRAYER.

O Mary, Queen of heaven and of earth, Thou hast surpassed all the patriarchs, by the purity, constancy, and endurance of thy confidence in God ; by thy hope of man's redemption, and by thy reliance on all the other promises of God. Thou hast excelled all the prophets, by the liveliness, submission, and extent, of thy faith. Thou art the Queen of both, for they all sighed for thee.

they all rejoiced at thy coming, as at the aurora of the world's salvation : and all praise and honour thee in heaven as their Queen, and the Queen of all creatures. Obtain for me a participation of that lively faith and that unshaken hope, through which they have attained eternal life ; that through faith and hope I may obtain perfect charity, and persevere to the end in the love of God. Thus do I hope to attain eternal life, and with the patriarchs and prophets, and all the elect of God, honour and adore the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, through all eternity. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Return God thanks for the gift of faith ; and say a " Hail Mary," for the conversion of all who are strangers to this diviné light.

ASPIRATION.

Mary, aid thy servants, who have been redeemed with the precious blood of thy Son !

St. Bonaventura.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY.

QUEEN OF APOSTLES,
QUEEN OF CONFESSORS,

Pray for us.

“ And a great sign appeared in heaven. A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.”—Apocalypse, xii. 1.

This is understood by some holy fathers of the blessed Virgin. She is clothed with the sun, by her close relation to Christ, the sun of Justice; she has the moon under her feet, for she is the great channel of God's mercy to man; and on her head is a crown of twelve stars, because those twelve great lights of the world, the apostles, acknowledge her for their Queen, and encircle her head with a new wreath of glory. How these chosen disciples of Jesus Christ must have loved Mary—the mother of their dear Master! With what reverence they regarded her, who was the Mother of Him, whose power they had seen so frequently and so wonderfully displayed, and whose divine nature the Father himself had revealed to them through Peter! Mary was the teacher of the apostles; because they learned from her many of the circumstances, which preceded and followed the birth of Christ, which they could not otherwise have known, except by express revelation. She

is especially mentioned to have been united with them in prayer and retirement, after our Lord's ascension, when they chose the apostle Mathias, and when the Holy Ghost descended upon them. We may be assured that as the Divine Spirit communicates himself in proportion to the dispositions of those whom he visits, Mary received graces on this occasion, which made her the admiration of the apostolic college, by the increased zeal and constancy she manifested. With such an example before them, need we wonder that the apostles co-operated so faithfully with the graces they then received; and that they went forth to announce the glad tidings of salvation, without being intimidated by the dangers to which they thus exposed themselves. If, now, they are bright and shining stars in heaven, they owe much of their success to the influence of Mary's example, and to the efficacy of her prayers.

Mary is the queen of those apostolic men, whom God has raised up in every age and country, to be teachers in His church; and who have defended it by their learning, while they edified its members by their heroic sanctity, and enlarged its boundaries by their apostolic zeal. They all have been the servants of Mary, whom they regarded as their most powerful aid, in all that they undertook for the promotion of God's greater glory. The founders of the different religious orders have bequeathed this devotion to their children, as the most precious portion of their inheritance; and some among them have ordered their disciples to merit for themselves the powerful protection of Mary by the daily recital of her office. They knew, that as their only object was to promote the glory of

God they could not employ a more efficacious means for securing success, than the intercession of her who desires, more than any other creature, that His kingdom should be established in all hearts. Hence their confidence in her was unbounded, and their sentiments, those of the great St. Cyril of Alexandria, who addressing the holy Virgin, says : “ By thee the Trinity is glorified ; by thee the precious cross is celebrated, and adored throughout the whole world. By thee, heaven exults, the angels and archangels rejoice, the demons are put to flight, and lost man is restored to heaven. By thee, mankind, which was enslaved by the errors of idolatry, has been converted to truth ; believers have been baptized ; and churches are erected throughout the whole world. By thy aid, nations have done penance. What more can be said ? By thee, the only begotten Son of God, that true light, has shined on those that were in darkness, and in the shadow of death. Who can worthily celebrate thy praises, O Mother and Virgin ! ” *

What more efficacious means of promoting the diffusion of Catholic truth and Catholic piety can be employed, than to accompany all our efforts for both, by carrying about Mary in our hearts, and encouraging others to the practice of this devotion ? The church, solemnly addressing her, says : “ Rejoice, O Virgin Mary, because thou alone hast destroyed all heresies.” This was the language of men who had practical experience of its truth. This was the sentiment of those faithful dispensers of God’s mysteries, who, both in

• St. Cyril cont. Nestorium.

ancient and modern times, not only overcame the attacks made on their own souls, but also made great inroads among God's enemies, either by bringing whole nations into the fold of Christ, or by renewing the face of the earth among degenerate Christians. If we wish that our exertions should be crowned by equally glorious results, we must use the same weapons which rendered them successful. We shall find, that devotion to Mary is the great bulwark of Christian faith and morality: because it cannot be practised, without imparting to those who adopt it, a more accurate notion of the incarnation of the Son of God, and a more feeling sense of its immense advantages to us than can otherwise be communicated.

EXAMPLE.

The great apostle of India, St. Francis Xavier, was distinguished by his tender devotion to the Mother of God. It was on the festival of her Assumption that he made his first vows. When he visited the church of Loretto, he felt, for the first time, a great desire of devoting himself to the propagation of the gospel in India. He was accustomed to offer up all his petitions to God, through the intercession of Mary; and, in his public instructions, after begging the gift of a lively faith for himself and his hearers, he addressed himself to Mary, whom, in the conclusion of his discourse, he always saluted with the *Salve Regina*—"Hail, holy Queen." He undertook nothing without first recommending it to God through Mary; and in the innumerable dangers to which he was exposed, he had recourse to her

for protection. Far from being ashamed of being called her servant, he gloried in this title, and carried his beads about his neck, to manifest it to all. In the performance of many of the miracles recorded in his life, he made use of the beads, thereby to induce others to practise this devotion. On being asked for some token by a merchant of Meliapore, who was about to embark for Malacca, he gave him his beads, saying: "They will be of some use to you, provided you have confidence in Mary." The ship in which he embarked, had scarcely got out of port, when she was driven on the rocks by a furious tempest, and shattered to pieces. The merchant, full of confidence in the Blessed Virgin, applied to her, who is, not without reason, called the "safety of the ship-wrecked." He held up the beads given him by Francis, and suddenly found himself miraculously transported to the shore.

St. Francis had a particular devotion to the immaculate conception of his dear Mother, and endeavoured on all occasions to propagate it. When about to undertake the conversion of great sinners, he never failed to place his hope of success in Mary, by whose intercession he also sought to obtain the remission of his own offences. In one of his letters he says: "I have taken the Queen of heaven for my protectress, that thus I may obtain the pardon of my innumerable sins." In his instructions, he always insisted much on the greatness of the Mother of God, and spared no exertion to induce others to place themselves under her protection. At the moment of his death—which occurred in the island of Sancian, almost in sight of that China, to which this most

zealous servant of Mary so much desired to announce the gospel—he appealed to her, by often repeating the beautiful and touching language of the church: “ Show thyself a mother.”

PRAYER.

O Mary! the Apostles left all things for the promotion of God’s glory; the confessors laboured unceasingly for the same glorious object. Thou hast surpassed the Apostles by the perfection of thy sacrifice, and by the fervour of thy zeal; thou dost excel the confessors, by the intrepidity with which thou didst confess Christ, when abandoned by all, and expiring on the cross. O sacred Virgin! obtain for me a portion of the apostolic spirit, a zeal for my own salvation, and the salvation of my brethren. Make me endeavour, by all means in my power, to extend the kingdom of thy divine Son, and offer incessantly my prayer for the conversion of all who are yet sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, or who are estranged from the one fold of the one Shepherd, thy divine Son. Make me ever ready to confess Jesus Christ both by word and work, that thus, through thy powerful intercession, O Queen of Confessors! I may be acknowledged by Him, before His Heavenly Father. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Devoutly recite the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, for the propagation of the Catholic faith.

ASPIRATION.

Rejoice, O Virgin Mary, thou alone hast destroyed all heresies in the whole world!

R

THIRTIETH DAY.

QUEEN OF MARTYRS,

Pray for us.

"Thy own soul a sword shall pierce."—Luke, xi. 35.

When the holy Simeon took the infant Jesus into his arms, on the day of his solemn presentation in the temple, he announced to the Virgin Mother of the Messiah, that this child was set up to be contradicted, and that a sword should pierce her own soul. Although all the life of Mary was marked with suffering, especially after the birth of Christ, this prophecy received its perfect accomplishment, when she beheld her Divine Son in the hands of his enemies, and saw him endure every variety of torture, which the malice and cruelty of his persecutors could inflict. These sufferings of the Mother of God are the peculiar objects of the church's devotion. She invites her children to sympathize with this most sorrowful and afflicted Mother;—to stand with her under the cross of the agonizing Jesus, and hear her address to them the words of the prophet Jeremias: "O all you that pass by the way, attend and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."* We cannot consider the part which Mary had in the sufferings

* Lamentations, i. 12.

of her divine Son, without addressing her in the language of the same prophet: "To what shall I compare thee, or to what shall I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem?—to what shall I equal thee, that I may comfort thee, O Virgin daughter of Sion, for great as the sea is thy destruction."*

To consider the nature and extent of Mary's sorrows, we must remember that she suffered in proportion as she loved. Her love of Jesus knew no bounds. The strongest feelings of maternal affection in other creatures are not to be compared with hers: for as she was far removed above the condition of our fallen nature, her sensibilities were proportionably increased; and as no mother had such a Son, no mother ever loved a son with such pure and ardent affection, as Mary did Jesus. Much as she loved Him as man, she loved Him much more as God: and hence her maternal affection partook in some degree of the infinite character of its divine object. "In other saints," says St. Bernard, "the greatness of their love diminished the excess of their sufferings; but the more Mary loved, the more she suffered; and her martyrdom was the more painful." What, then, must have been her feelings; how poignant her grief, at beholding all that Jesus had to endure from the treachery and weakness of his disciples; the calumnies of the false witnesses, and the blasphemies of his judges; the buffets and mockery of the high priest's servants; the scourging, crowning with thorns, and outrageous mockery of the soldiery! O, what a sight was presented to this most afflicted Mother, when Pilate produced Jesus

* Lam. ii. 13.

to the people—His hair clotted, and face disfigured, with the blood which yet continued to stream down from his perforated temples—His body one continued wound by the heavy and numerous stripes he had received—and covered with the garment of mock royalty, in which the barbarous soldiery had clad Him? What an accumulation of sorrow must have overwhelmed her, when she heard the inhuman cry of exultation, with which the infuriate multitude received the suffering Saviour; and heard them cry out with deafening shouts: “Away with this man;—crucify him, crucify him!”

It was on Calvary that Mary’s tender and loving heart received the most bitter wound. Place yourselves in spirit by her side, and contemplate the sad spectacle which she there had to behold. All the outrages and cruelties, all the mockeries and insults of the preceding part of the passion, seem now collected together, and discharged at once on the suffering Jesus. “He suffered in the body,” says a holy writer, “she in the heart.” When she saw her beloved son stretched on the cross, and beheld the rough nails driven into his sacred hands and feet; when she heard the blows of the hammer and saw the body of Jesus writhe in excruciating agony under this most barbarously cruel torture, how she must have suffered! When the cross was raised; and during the three hours that Jesus hung in living death upon it; every moment Mary suffered as much as would have caused her death, had not God supported her in an extraordinary manner. Every look she cast on Jesus—every expression of agony she discovered in him—every insult He received, was a renewal of a martyrdom

which has merited for her the title of "martyr of martyrs." The devout servant of Mary, St. Bernard, addressing this Queen of Martyrs, says : " Truly, O Blessed Mother, a sword pierced thy soul—for before it reached the body of thy Son, it passed through thy heart. And indeed after Jesus had expired, that lance which pierced His side did not affect his soul, but transfixed thine. For His soul was no longer there, but thine could not be torn from it ; Thy soul was then overwhelmed with sorrow, so that we justly call thee more than martyr, in whom the force of sorrow excelled the sense of corporal suffering. Was not that address of Jesus more piercing than a sword, and reaching even to the division of the soul from the spirit ?— ' Woman, behold thy son ! '—O what an exchange ! John is given to thee for Jesus—the servant for the Lord—the disciple for the master—the son of Zebedee for the Son of the Most High God—a mere man for the true God ! How must this have affected thy most loving heart, when even its remembrance pierces our stony and flinty breasts ! Wonder not, brethren, that Mary is said to be a martyr in her soul. Let him be astonished at it, who does not remember that Paul enumerates among the greatest crimes of the Gentiles, that they were without affection. Far be that from Mary ; far be it from her servants. But, perchance, some one may say : ' Did not she know he was to die ? ' ' Undoubtedly. ' ' Did not she hope that he would arise ? ' ' Most certainly. ' ' And did she then grieve at his crucifixion ? ' ' Most bitterly. ' But who art thou, brother, or whence hast thou derived that wisdom to make thee more astonished at the grief of Mary than at the sufferings

of Jesus? He could die of corporal agony: she could not die with Him of sympathy. Charity, greater than which no man hath had, caused His death: charity, the like of which no one hath had after her, caused her grief." Let us compassionate this most afflicted Mother, and be ever mindful that she justly claims not only our sympathy, but our gratitude. As it was the sins of men that caused the sufferings of Jesus; it was the sins of men that caused the grief of Mary. She suffered for our salvation, according to the prophecy of Simeon: "Thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed."

EXAMPLE.

Among the saints who have distinguished themselves by devotion to the Blessed Virgin, St. Francis of Borgia is particularly remarkable. This great man was Duke of Gandia, but left the world to serve God in the Society of Jesus, of which he was the third General. While in the world he led a very holy life, but God, who had great designs on him, inspired him with a desire of drawing still nearer to Him, by leaving all for His sake. When the Empress Isabella, the consort of Charles V., died in the bloom of youth, Francis received from the emperor the honourable commission of accompanying the corpse of the deceased from Toledo, where she died, to Grenada, the burying-place of the kings of Spain. Before the body was delivered to the clergy at Grenada, Francis was obliged to identify the corpse of the late Empress. On opening the coffin, her face was discovered to be so awfully deformed by the progress of putrefaction,

that no trace of her former countenance could be discovered. At the sight of this disgusting mass of rottenness and corruption, a ray of God's light shot across the soul of Francis, who recognised in it the fate of all earthly greatness and beauty. On returning to his house, he threw himself on his knees before God, and spent the whole night in prayer, in tears, and meditation. He then made the following vow, which he constantly repeated and confirmed—"Lord! I promise thee, that I will never more serve a creature, whom death may snatch from me." After the death of his wife, he executed his resolution: he renounced all earthly honours, possessions, and hopes, and entered into the Society of Jesus, to serve God in humility and retirement. During his life, this great Saint had a most ardent devotion to Mary. He said some prayers every day in her honour, especially the Rosary. He made this the occasion of meditating on the mysteries of our Saviour's life and death, which the church wishes to place before the minds of her children in this devotion. Whenever he thought of the incarnation of the Son of God, or of his life and death, he turned his thoughts to Mary, who had so great a part in all these saving mysteries.

In the meditation on the incarnation, he considered Jesus in the virginal womb of Mary; in the mysteries of his birth and childhood, he represented to himself this same divine Saviour in the arms of His holy Mother: in His private life, he saw Jesus subject to Mary as her Son. In the years of His divine mission among men, he thought how carefully Mary treasured up all the words and instructions of her divine Son. In the suffer-

ings of Jesus, he beheld Mary, suffering through the excess of love and grief, transfixed by the sword of grief, and standing at the foot of the cross. He especially desired to excite in his heart the same sentiments as Mary experienced on these occasions. Thus, in all his meditations on the mysteries of redemption, his eyes ever turned to Mary, who so lovingly and heroically contributed to our salvation. The boundless confidence that he had in Jesus, as his Saviour and Mediator, was founded principally on Mary, whom he regarded as his advocate with her divine Son. He sought to make all men participate in His feelings towards her, and in his confidence in her intercession. He propagated this devotion with wonderful success among all classes, and thereby was enabled to preserve many souls from vice, to recall many others to duty, and to excite others to enter on the way of perfection. Being convinced that we never pray in vain, when we offer our prayers, through Mary, to her divine Son, he had recourse to her on all occasions, and always found in her support and consolation. So true is it, that Mary never abandons her servants; and that, as St. Bernard has remarked, no one can seek in vain the aid of this Mother of mercy, who applies to her with an humble, filial, and confiding heart.

PRAYER.

O Mary Queen of Martyrs! how bitterly didst thou weep at the sufferings and death of thy Divine Son! how much hast thou suffered for the sins of men! By the merits of thy bitter sorrows,

obtain for me a sincere sorrow for my sins, and the gift of tears to lament them. Although innocent, thou hast suffered excessive torments, for my sake ; and yet how little do I think of all that my sins have made thee endure ! O most sorrowful Virgin ! obtain for me a most tender devotion to the sacred passion of our Divine Lord. Make me remain with thee on Calvary, under the cross of thy agonizing Jesus, and mingle my tears with his precious blood. Make me the companion of thy sufferings, by my constant devotion to the passion of thy dear Jesus. Transfix my heart with sorrow at the sight of His sufferings, and at the remembrance of thy sorrows ; and make me duly prepare for death, by crucifying my corrupt inclinations, and dying daily to the world and its vanities. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Recite the “ Stabat Mater ” in honour of this most afflicted Mother. Make the cross the frequent subject of your meditation.

ASPIRATION.

O Mother, fountain of love, make me feel the force of thy sorrow, and weep with thee : inflame my heart with the love of Christ, my God !

THIRTY-FIRST DAY.

QUEEN OF ALL SAINTS,

Pray for us.

"After this I saw a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne."
—Apocalypse, vii. 9.

The Most Holy Virgin survived her Divine Son for many years, in which she continued to be the consolation and edification of the infant church. How her heart must have exulted at beholding the name of Jesus honoured throughout the world, and the darkness of idolatry and immorality vanish before the bright light of His everlasting gospel! She doubtless experienced inconceivable joy at the increase of God's kingdom; and felt that all she had endured was more than compensated for by the glorious results which followed the humiliations and sufferings of her Divine Son. But what language can express the intimacy of the union of her soul with God! Although she longed to be dissolved and be with Christ, she patiently submitted to the dispositions of God's providence, and made her desire of enjoying His heavenly bliss give way to her wish, to promote His love among men. When the time approached, in which she gave up her pure soul to God, how joyfully did she exult at the prospect of passing to the enjoyment of that God, who had done such great

things for her, and, through her, for all mankind!

Although Mary was not exempted from the stroke of death, God did not suffer that body of which Jesus Christ assumed flesh, to undergo the consequences of death, or to remain in the grave. "The flesh of Jesus," says St. Augustin, "was the flesh of Mary," and as God did not permit His Holy One to see corruption, so He did not permit the immaculate body of the Holy Virgin to moulder in the tomb. Although not an article of faith, it is one of the most sacred and venerable traditions of the Christian church—which cannot be called in question by any of her children, without grievous presumption—that Mary's body, like that of her Divine Son, was raised by God from the grave, and, being united with her sacred soul, assumed into heaven. Hence in the joyous festival of her assumption, which the church has celebrated from the earliest times, this spouse of Jesus Christ calls on her children to exult. "Let us all rejoice in the Lord, while we celebrate the festival of the glorious Virgin Mary, at whose assumption, the angels rejoice and praise the Son of God." Let us also rejoice with the angels of God, and behold in spirit this holiest and most perfect of God's creatures enter into that heaven, which, through her Son Jesus, she had opened to man. If Solomon, when he saw his mother approach, rose up, and ordered a throne to be placed for her at his right hand, can we doubt but that Christ, of whom Solomon was a type, honoured the approach of his loved and faithful mother, placed her on a throne, far above that on which the highest of the angelic host are seated,

—and crowned her Queen of Angels and of Saints.

St. Bernard thus invites the daughters of Sion, that is, the children of the church, to contemplate the glory of this heavenly Queen: "Enter and see this great Queen, and the diadem, where-with her Son has crowned her." Yes, raise your eyes, O Christian soul, and behold this Queen of all Saints, enjoying the united glories that you have separately considered. See her, surrounded by the angelic hosts, and all the heavenly powers, —the cherubim and seraphim, the thrones and dominations;—encircled by the glorious choir of apostles, the venerable company of prophets, and the white-robed army of martyrs. Behold the confessors and virgins, who have followed in her footsteps, by the practice of the evangelical counsels. Admire the holy matrons, who have honoured Mary, that most favoured among women, whose divine maternity has been their consolation and support; and who, in imitation of her, have consecrated to God the gifts they received from Him. See her, in a word, surrounded by all that is holy and venerable in human nature—by the saints of every tribe and tongue, and by those who have sanctified themselves, in humble as well as in elevated stations—in the midst of the corruptions of the world, as well as in the sacred asylums of religious retirement. If the contemplation of each one of these classes be more than sufficient to engross our attention and excite our admiration, what must be the effect of their united splendours! what the brilliancy of that crown which Mary has received from her Divine Son as Queen of all the Saints! "Who," asks St. Bernard, "can appre-

ciate the brightness of those gems, or name the stars, of which the crown of Mary is composed?" But let us remember, that if we wish to be associated to this glorious group in heaven, we must rank with them on earth, by copying their imitation of the virtues of the Queen of Saints.

EXAMPLE.

St. Andrew Corsini affords us, in his life, an example from which we may learn how efficacious is the intercession of the Queen of Saints, in withdrawing the sinner from the error of his way, and exciting him to aspire to, and attain, a high degree of perfection. Before the birth of Andrew, he was offered to the Blessed Virgin, by his holy parents, as the first fruits of their marriage. On the night in which he was born, his mother, Peregrina, had a dream which filled her with alarm. It seemed to her, as if she had brought forth a wolf, who, fleeing to a church, was changed into a lamb. This was a picture of what was afterwards to happen to Andrew. His pious parents employed every care and precaution, to bring him up in the fear of God; but, as too often happens, through the influence of bad company, an immoderate desire of play, and neglect of duty, he fell into the greatest disorders. Dissipation hurried him from one vice to another; until he was without affection for his parents, whom he disobeyed without remorse; so that all who knew him were full of apprehension for the future. Meanwhile, his Mother, mindful of her dream, sought consolation from Mary by conti-

nual prayer. Andrew, while one day preparing for a party of pleasure, expressed himself in a very disrespectful manner to his mother; she burst into tears, and told him the depth of her affliction. "Indeed, son," said she, "you are the wolf that I saw in my dream." Somewhat moved at these words, he said: "What do you say, mother? Am I a wolf?" Peregrina hereupon related the dream that she had had, and also mentioned that, before his birth, she had offered him to the Blessed Virgin. So great was the impression this made on Andrew, that he was unable to sleep during the following night. The thought, that he had been dedicated to the Mother of God occupied his mind. "Virgin Mother," he at length exclaimed, "because I am thy servant, I will unceasingly serve thee." At the break of day, he went to the church of the Carmelites, and prostrating himself before an image of Mary, offered himself up to this merciful Mother, and bade her change this wolf into a lamb. He frequently repeated this prayer; at length it was heard. To serve the holy Virgin in a perfect manner, he asked the prior of the convent to admit him into the order. Having obtained this request, he showed, by the piety of his life, that the dream of his mother was not an idle fancy. Andrew made great advances in virtue, and was soon an experienced master in perfection. He was subsequently ordained priest, in obedience to the orders of his superior, and soon after was made bishop. In all the circumstances of his life, he cherished a fervent devotion to Mary, his powerful protectress; and sought all opportunities of proclaiming her praises. He was called to the

nuptials of the heavenly Lamb in 1373, and experienced, in his last hours, the powerful intercession of her, who had procured for him the grace of conversion, and inspired him with the desire for perfection.

PRAYER.

O, Queen of heaven and of earth! God has loved and honoured thee above all creatures: and now thou art exalted above all saints in the kingdom of heaven. All admire thy virtue and perfection; all praise, and reverence thee as their Queen. O, glorious Queen! despise not my petitions: accept of my homage, my veneration, and my love. I commend myself to thy powerful protection, and dedicate to thee what I am, and what I have. On thee do I found my hope, for although thou art my Queen, thou art also my gracious and amiable Mother. Thou hast quitted this world, and entered into possession of thy kingdom. Thy elevation has increased thy compassion for the hapless children of Adam. From the sublime throne on which thou art seated, cast thy merciful eyes on the inhabitants of earth, and take pity on them. Thou seest to what dangers they are exposed, as long as they sail on this tempestuous sea, on which so many have been wrecked. Obtain for me perseverance in the grace of God, that on quitting this world I may chaunt thy praises and benefits, and, in union with thee, give endless praise and glory to our common Creator. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Resolve to think often of heaven, and make use of every opportunity of impressing yourself with a high idea of its happiness. When you see beautiful objects, think with a holy servant of God, how much more beautiful is God! When you taste any thing that pleases you, think, how much delight is found in the enjoyment of heaven. When you hear fine music, think of the choirs of angels.

ASPIRATION.

O Mary, who can refuse to love thee!



CONCLUDING EXERCISE.



"Give me thy heart."—Prov. xxiii. 26.

Besides the general motives which should attach us to the service of Mary, there are some special ones which are well calculated to make us consecrate to her our heart, conformably to the received custom of concluding the exercises of this holy month. The heart is described by our Blessed Saviour as the seat of our disorderly passions; and it is recognised by all as the symbol of our best and holiest feelings. If, then, we wish to purify it from all disorder, and offer it a pleasing sacrifice to God—if we are prepared to comply with the obligation which He has imposed on us,

of giving Him our heart, we cannot do better than consecrate it to Mary, and endeavour to assimilate it to her heart, which is so closely united with the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

If we find ourselves defiled with the sins of years, and desire to offer to God the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart—to whom can we apply more able or willing to aid us, when we ask of God to “create a clean heart” within us, than she whose heart was ever pure from the defilements of sin, and who, on that account, is most powerful with God? If we feel ourselves oppressed by the consequences of Adam’s sin, and find that passion seeks to gain those hearts which we would wish to preserve pure—what can we do better calculated to give efficacy to our prayer, that “our heart may be immaculate” in His sight, than to turn our eyes to Mary, and make her immaculate purity the object of our desires? Do we desire to say with the psalmist: “Lord, my heart is not exalted?” Let us look to Mary, who, although supereminently holy and elevated in dignity, yet kept her own nothingness so constantly before her eyes, as to find no motive more powerful for magnifying God, than that he had vouchsafed to look down on her. Do we desire that our hearts should glow with love of God, and that we may be able to say to Him: “Place me as a seal upon thy heart?” What can we do better than seek, by loving Mary, to love Him, whom she loved with a love stronger than death?

We read in the life of a great servant of God, the blessed Alphonsus Rodriguez, a lay brother of the Society of Jesus—that in his devout simplicity he once said to the Blessed Virgin: “My most

amiable mother, I know that thou dost love me, but thou dost not love me as tenderly as I love thee." Hereupon he seemed to hear the Blessed Virgin reply: "What sayest thou, Alphonsus? O how far above thy love for me is my love for thee: there is less distance between heaven and earth!" Let us, then, be intimately convinced that our holy Mother loves us above all that we can conceive, and let it be our only aim to love her without measure. Let us love her as the saints have loved her:—as St. Bernard, who styled her the "ravisher of hearts,"—as St. Aloysius, whose heart beat as often as he pronounced her sacred name—as St. Philip of Neri, who called her "his delight,"—as St. Stanislas of Kostka, who communicated to those who heard him a portion of the ardour with which he himself was inflamed, as often as he spoke of his "dear mother;"—as the devout Blossius, who asks with amazement: "O Mary, who is there that does not love thee?"—as St. Teresa, who took her for her mother, when death had deprived her of her earthly parent—as St. Mechtildis, who procured by prayer that she should be in a special manner the child of Mary:—in a word, as all the saints have loved her. We are her children; let us then love her with filial love.

EXAMPLE.

The fruits of the devotion to the immaculate heart of Mary have been lately exhibited, in a very extraordinary manner, in a confraternity attached to the church of Notre-Dame-Des-Victoires in Paris. This parish is situated in the centre of that city, and contains a population, almost entirely

engrossed with the cares and pleasures of life, the agitation of politics, and the amusements of the theatre. Almost every religious sentiment seemed extinct in the vast majority of the people: the church was deserted even on the greatest solemnities, and the sacraments were entirely neglected. The zealous pastor of this church, afflicted beyond measure at the evils he was obliged to witness, without being able to remedy, resolved to consecrate his parish to the most holy and immaculate heart of Mary. The Archbishop of Paris approved of this devotion, by an ordinance of the 16th December, 1836. On the third Sunday of Advent, the exercises commenced by singing the vespers of the Blessed Virgin, at which a more numerous congregation assisted than was wont to be on the greatest festivals. A sermon was preached on the nature and object of the devotion; after which, at the Benediction of the Holy Sacrament, the Litany of the Blessed Virgin was sung. The "Refuge of Sinners" was chaunted with extraordinary feeling, and with an effusion of sentiment which showed, that among this congregation, consisting of from five to six hundred persons, there were many who felt the need they had of the divine mercy, and the confidence they placed in the intercession of Mary.

The pastor was kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, and felt himself deeply affected at this manifestation of feeling. He raised his eyes to Mary, and recommended to her protection this pious association. "As a sign of thy protection," added he, "obtain for me the conversion of M——. I will visit him to-morrow in thy name."

gentleman was one of the last ministers of the virtuous, but unfortunate, Louis XVI. He had been attached to the sect of pretended philosophers of the last century, and had not practised any of the duties of religion since his youth. He was now in the eightieth year of his age ; and, for some months, had been sick and blind, although his intellect was as strong as ever. Ten times had the worthy pastor endeavoured to approach him, and ten times had he been refused entrance. On the following Monday, the 12th December, he presented himself once more, but was at first denied admittance ; he persisted, and at length was allowed to enter. After some moments of indifferent conversation M—— said to his pastor, without making any preamble : “ Please give me your benediction—I am delighted at your visit ; I cannot enjoy the satisfaction of beholding you ; but I feel your presence. Since your visit I enjoy a peace, a calm, an interior joy, which I have not known before.” The worthy pastor did not let this opportunity pass without profiting by it, and completely succeeded in the great object of his visit. M—— survived until the following April, and all his time was devoted to the great concern of his salvation. He expired in the most edifying sentiments of faith and hope. This manifest benediction of God on the infant association inspired its members with increased confidence in Mary. The devotion was soon propagated, not only in France but throughout the rest of Europe ; so that Naples, Portugal, and Sweden, are the only countries whose names were not inscribed on the register of the association at the time of the publication of the book whence

these facts have been taken.* We find even New York, Charleston, Dubuque, Detroit, the Bermuda Isles, Martinique, and St. Domingo, mentioned as possessing members of this most amiable devotion. The present Pope Gregory XVI., by an apostolical brief, dated the 24th April, 1838, erected the association into an arch-confraternity, and enriched it with many spiritual treasures. The most hardened sinners have been converted in a manner that showed that these miracles of grace were the result of Mary's powerful intercession, procured by the fervent prayers of the devout members of this association.

ACT OF CONSECRATION

TO THE

SACRED HEART OF MARY.

O sacred and immaculate Heart of Mary ever Virgin! O Heart, most holy, most pure, most noble, most august, and most perfect which the omnipotence of God has formed in a pure creature! O exhaustless source of goodness and mildness, of mercy and of love! model of all virtues; perfect image of the adorable Heart of Jesus! O Heart, which didst always burn with the most ardent charity, which didst love God more than the Seraphim—more than the angels and the saints!

* 1839.

O Heart of the Mother of the Redeemer, which hast so lively a sense of our miseries, which didst suffer so much for our salvation, which hast loved us with such ardent love, and which claimest, by so many titles, the respect, love, and veneration of all creatures—vouchsafe to accept my unworthy homage. Prostrate before thee, O sacred Heart of Mary, I honour thee with the most profound respect of which I am capable. I thank thee for the sentiments of mercy and of love with which thou hast been so often moved at the sight of my miseries. I return thee thanks for all the benefits which thy maternal bounty has procured for me. I unite myself with all pure souls, who find their delight in honouring, praising, and loving thee.

O most amiable Heart! thou shalt be henceforward, after the Heart of Jesus, the object of my veneration, of my love, and of my devotion. By thee will I approach my Saviour; and by thee shall I receive His graces and mercies. Thou wilt be my refuge in affliction, my consolation in suffering, and my assistance in all my necessities. I will learn from thee purity, humility, and obedience: and derive from thee love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Master. Amen.

PRACTICE.

RECITE THE

LITANY OF THE SACRED HEART OF MARY.

Lord, have mercy on us !

Son of God, have mercy on us !

Holy Ghost, have mercy on us !

Jesus Christ, hear us !

Jesus Christ, graciously hear us !

God the Father of Heaven, have mercy on us !

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy
on us !

God the Holy Ghost, have mercy on us !

Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us !

Heart of Mary, conceived without the stain
of sin !

Heart of Mary, full of grace !

Heart of Mary, sanctuary of the Holy Tri-
nity !

Heart of Mary, tabernacle of the Incarnate
Word !

Heart of Mary, after God's own Heart !

Heart of Mary, illustrious throne of glory !

Heart of Mary, perfect holocaust of divine
love !

Heart of Mary, abyss of humility !

Heart of Mary, attached to the cross !

Heart of Mary, seat of mercy !

Heart of Mary, consolation of the afflicted !

Heart of Mary, refuge of sinners !

Heart of Mary, advocate of the church, and
Mother of all the faithful !

Heart of Mary, after Jesus, the most assured
hope of the agonizing !

Heart of Mary, Queen of angels and of Saints !

Pray for us.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, spare us O Lord!

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, hear us O Lord!

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. O Lord!

V. O Most sacred and amiable heart of Mary, Mother of God, pray for us!

R. That our hearts may be inflamed with divine love.

PRAYER.

O God of goodness, who hast filled the holy and immaculate Heart of Mary with the same sentiments of mercy and tenderness for us, with which the Heart of Jesus Christ, thy Son, and her Son, was always overflowing; grant that all who honour this Virginal Heart may preserve until death a perfect conformity of sentiments and inclination with the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, who with thee and the Holy Ghost, lives and reigns, One God, for ever and ever. Amen.

ASPIRATION.

O Mary! Thou art light in our doubts, consolation in our sorrows, and protection in our dangers! After thy only Son, thou art the certain hope of faithful souls! Hail, hope of the desponding, and refuge of the destitute; to whom thy Son has given such power, that whatever thou willest is immediately done.—Blosius.

